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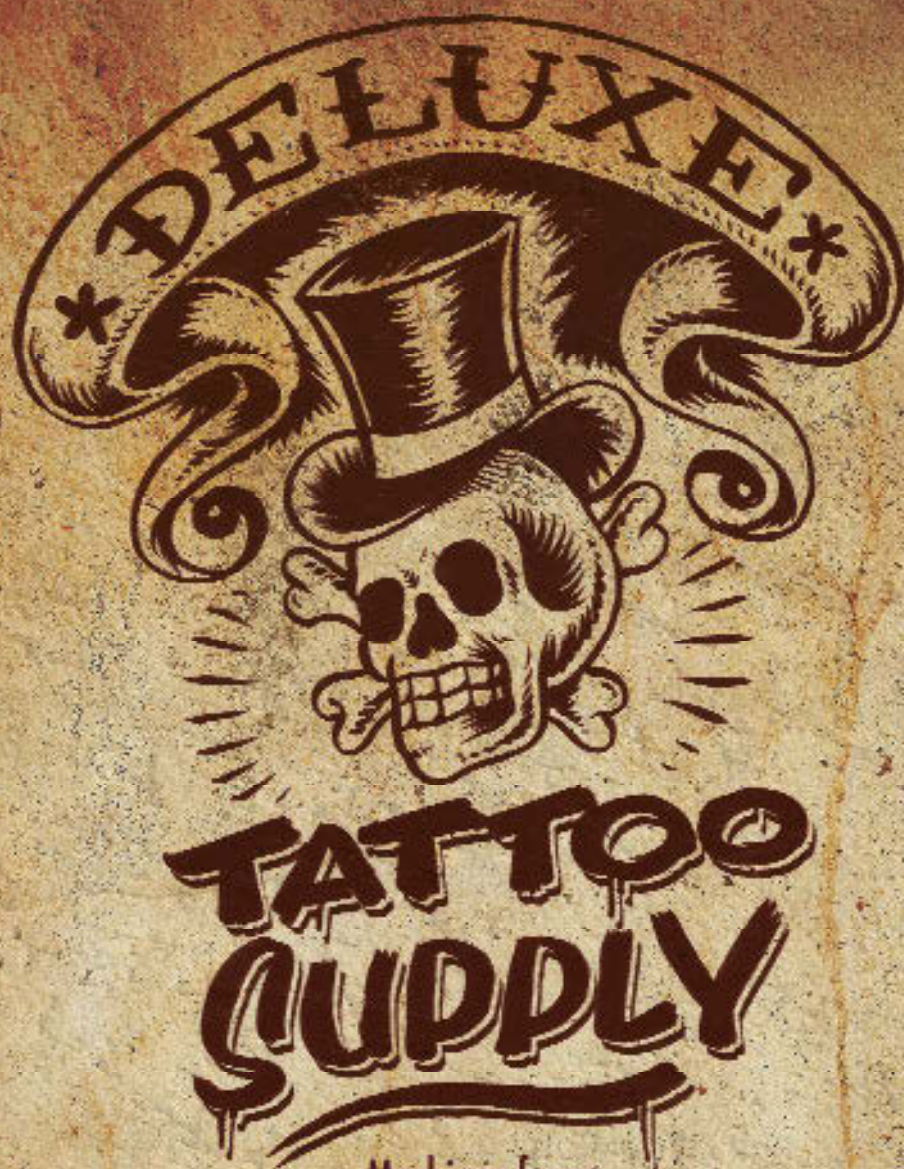
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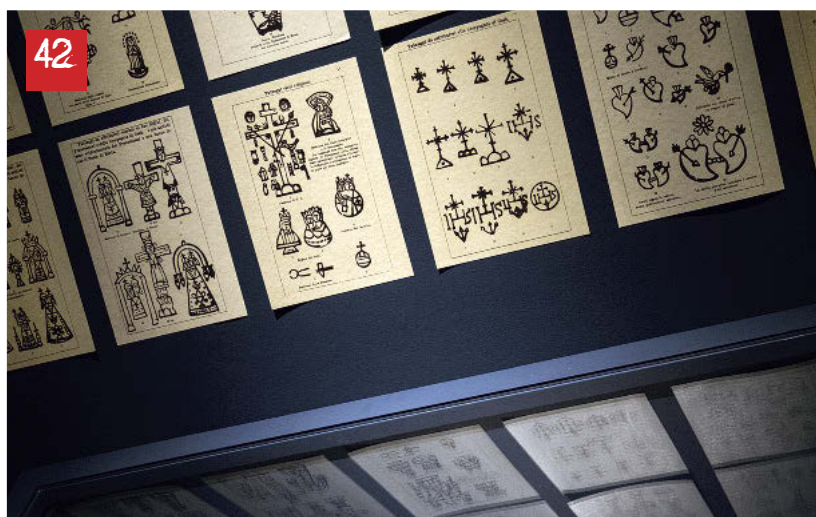
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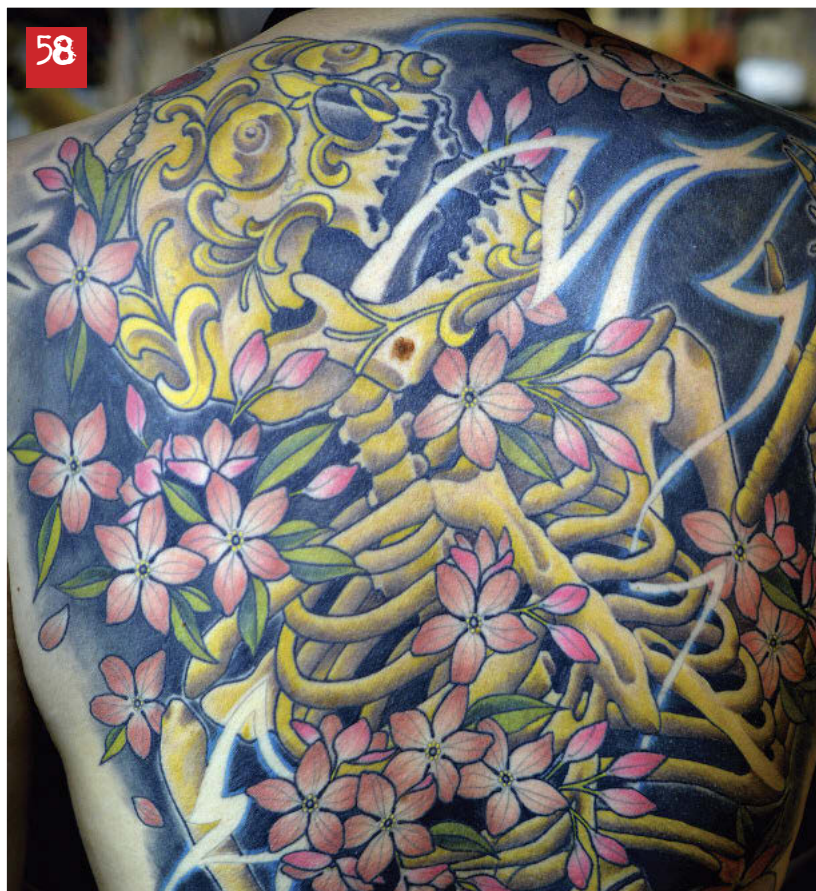
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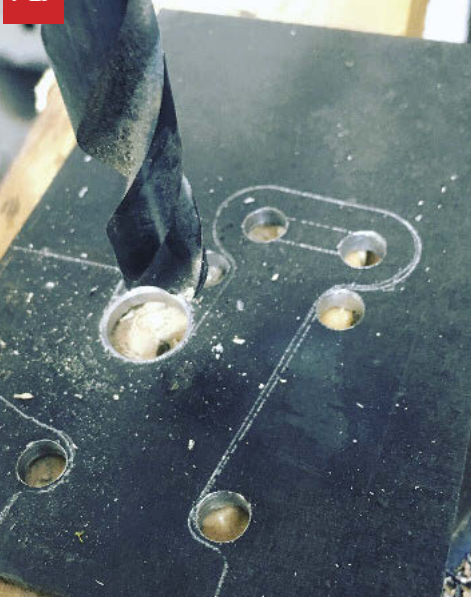
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WELCOME to 155

I've taken inspiration for this editorial from this month's 'Tales From the Naughty Step', which you'll find at the back of the magazine. I won't spoil it for you, but it's a good 'un and was written by Paul just after he'd had an operation.

If you're self-employed, being in hospital - or being unable to work, whatever the reason - is a big deal. On paper, self-employment seems like a great deal; you work the hours you want, you don't have to answer to a boss, you can charge what you want (as long as people will pay!) and you can take as many holidays as you like. Plus, any bonuses come straight to you and there's no itchy, ill-fitting uniform involved (unless you like that sort of thing, of course). Sounds perfect, right? Well, it kinda is... until Life gets in the way.

The thing about Life is that as much as we can try to control it, there's always something that likes to pop up and throw us off course. We can be organised and plan our schedules months in advance, but there are eventualities and situations that happen beyond our control. Sickness is a great (or not so great) example of this. Want to know how you can tell who is self-employed amongst a group of people? Just go up to them and casually announce that you've had Norovirus; I guarantee you that the self-employed will be the first to run out of that room, hands in front of their mouths. Simply put, if you're self-employed you just can't afford to be ill. And as for all those holidays... well, it's hard to switch off, or turn work away, when you don't know when your next job will come in.

Last month, Life got in the way for me. My daughter's childminder went on holiday and I was unable to get anyone else to take their place. Living alone with a toddler is one thing, but trying to work to a deadline with a toddler? Forget it. Cue 'Finding Nemo' on repeat, ice lolly bribes and trying to work while we're in the park. My productivity was through the floor; I had Play-Doh embedded in my laptop and I was dreaming about bloody clown fish in my sleep.

I'm not telling you this for you to all shower me with sympathy (but if you'd like to send me vegan treats and messages of support, then I won't object), more to illustrate a point. Despite the pressure of the upcoming print deadline, I've been very lucky in that the Total Tattoo team are actually a very cool and understanding bunch of people. Plus, I've been able to spend time with my daughter who, in spite of her occasional tantrums, is pretty awesome. Fuck knows how I've done it.

With this in mind, I think it's important to remember those who are self-employed and how they need a bit of compassion when their circumstances change. As well as a loss of income for not doing the job, there's also the potential for negative online reviews (I'm sure I'm not the only one who has seen a customer's one-star review on Facebook, because of a cancellation?) and that dreadful feeling of letting people down. When you're your own boss, that really is a hard feeling to shake.



Lizzy
Total Tattoo Editorial Team
editor@totaltattoo.co.uk

'I believe when life gives you lemons, you should make lemonade...and try to find someone whose life has given them vodka, and have a party.'

— Ron White.

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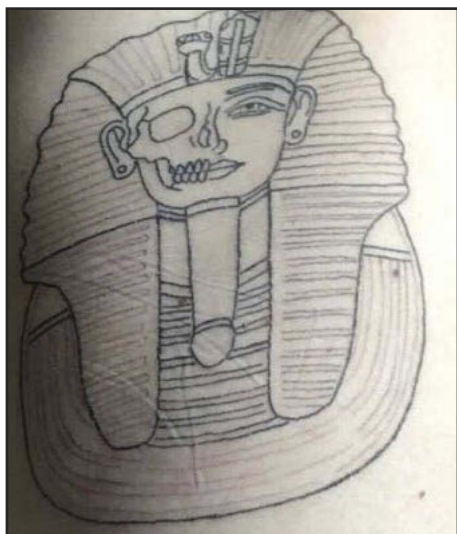
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NEWS & REVIEWS

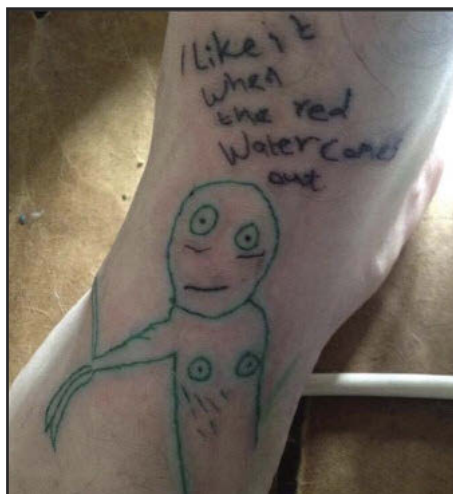
Tattoo news and reviews for your delectation and delight. If it goes on in the tattoo world, it goes in here. Send us your news items, books or products for review and items of general curiosity and intrigue for the tattoo cognoscenti.

News, Total Tattoo Magazine, 111 Furze Road, Norwich, Norfolk, NR7 0AU

DO YOUR WORST



We've heard about a bizarre tattoo competition in Teesside. Sumo, a weekly alt clubbing event at the Middlesbrough Empire, offered free entry for four, free alcohol, a commemorative mug and "the one and only Sumo fidget spinner in existence ever" to the person sending in the picture of the "worst tattoo in Boro". Apparently they were inundated with entries from Teessiders. Having a tattoo you don't like clearly doesn't always mean you don't want to show it off!



BEAN THERE DONE THAT

Our news radar has picked up the amusing story of a caffeine addict who has decided to pay tribute to his favourite coffee shop franchise by getting a sizeable tattoo of one of their instantly (no pun intended) recognisable takeaway cups. For Sam Cooper, who frequents Costa Coffee in Leigh-on-Sea, the tattoo was a spur-of-the-moment decision. He'd been thinking about getting sleeves themed around his passions of cars and music, but somehow his first-ever tattoo turned out to be something rather different. A Costa spokesperson said they were flattered by his loyalty – and Sam is quoted as saying his next tattoo might perhaps be a bacon sandwich.



ARTIST WANTED

Twit Twoo are seeking an additional full-time artist to join their team (note – this is not an apprenticeship). Part-time would also be considered. Existing client base and at least three years' studio experience preferred. You will need to submit an extensive high quality portfolio of healed work. Email Alan at tattoo@twitttwoo.tattoo with a link to your instagram or website.

WHAT HO, JEEVES!



The Johnson's Residence, a unique nightclub and entertainment venue in downtown Barrie, Ontario, Canada, is offering free Friday-night admission to anyone sporting a tattooed portrait of its genial host, Jeeves Edwards (or one of a number of other specially themed images). Jeeves originally posted the idea as a social media stunt, then local studio Ruby Tattoo upped the ante by designing a series of tattoos for clubbers to choose from and offering to ink the first few volunteers for free. Intriguingly, one of the Jeeves tattoo designs has no eyes, nose or mouth – perhaps signifying the professional discretion of the butler himself and the fact that what happens at The Johnson's Residence stays at The Johnson's Residence!



ARTIST WANTED



Eightfold Tattoo are looking for a new artist to join their busy studio. All styles of work will be considered; ideally they want a solid all-rounder. Some experience of working in a tattoo studio is a must, but the most important thing is your technical ability. Please note, this is not an apprenticeship. Email links to your portfolio and a short bio to eightfoldtattoo@gmail.com

CAN YOU HELP?

Police are trying to identify a woman tragically killed in a recent road accident involving a lorry. She is described as slim with shoulder-length hair and a tattoo of a unicorn on her left shoulder; and she was wearing jeans, boots, a t-shirt and an engagement ring. The accident happened on the A1139 in Peterborough at around 7pm on Sunday 9th July and, at the time of going to print, the police have sadly not yet been able to trace any next of kin. (The lorry driver stopped at the scene and we understand no arrests are being made in connection with the incident.) If you have any information that might help, you are asked to call the Road Policing Unit on 101, quoting reference CC-09072017-0504.



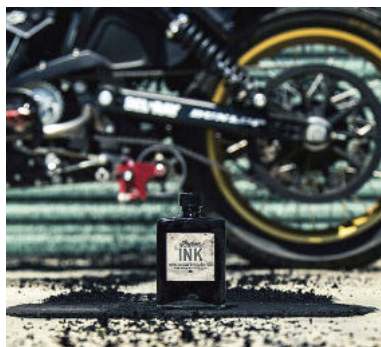
REMEMBERING MARK NESMITH

On September 17th there will be a charity tattoo convention taking place in memory of tattooist Mark Nesmith who was tragically murdered in Coventry (see obituary in Total Tattoo Issue 154). "We would love to have you here with us," say Mark's friends from Hales Street Studios and Grizzly Art Collective, "to celebrate the life of Nes. Together we can give him the send off he deserves. With loud music, great tattoos, laughs, smiles and the beautiful feeling of being part of something amazing – just like Mark made us feel, everyday we spent with him. There will be tattooing with walk-ups available, live music featuring a number of DJ's, Charles Dexter Ward & The Imagineers and Special Brew headlining – plus raffled artwork and many more fun surprises. 100% of all monies raised will be given to Mark's mother and father." The charity day takes place on September 17th, from 11am-8pm, at FarGo Village, Far Gosford Street, Coventry, CV1 5ED. Entry £10 on the door, free to under 16s.



BIKES IN THE BLOOD

Bikes and tattoos have always been inseparable, but freestyle motorcross legend Carey Hart has taken that connection to a whole new level by getting himself tattooed with ink made from the carbon residue from an awesome burnout. His motorcycle is now literally part of his body. Franco Vescovi of Nocturnal Tattoo Ink processed the residue to make it sterile and toxin-free, then used it to create a unique tattoo ink; Carey then got himself tattooed with his son's name. Watch the video: www.grindtv.com/moto/motocross-rider-carey-hart-gets-a-tattoo-with-ink-from-a-burnout-video



TATTOOING AS TORTURE

This is one of the most horrifying tattoo stories we've ever read. According to news reports from Brazil, a teenager who was caught allegedly stealing a bicycle was forcibly tattooed across his forehead with the words 'I am a thief and a loser' (in Portuguese). The tattooist and an accomplice have reportedly been arrested and charged with torture, but the teenager's whereabouts are currently unknown.



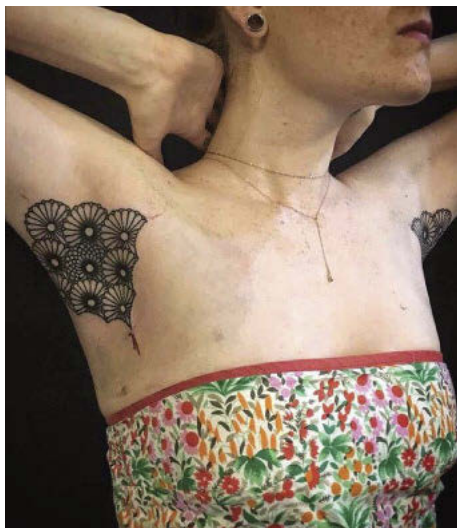
NEW ARTIST AT EPONA



From 21st September, Martin Crosthwaite will be joining Epona Art and Tattoo (in Southwell, Nottingham). To see more of his work, head to his Instagram

@martinx8tattoo or his website www.martinxw8.com

THAT'S THE PITS



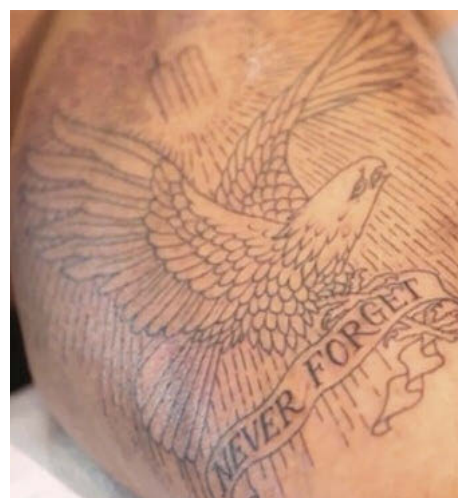
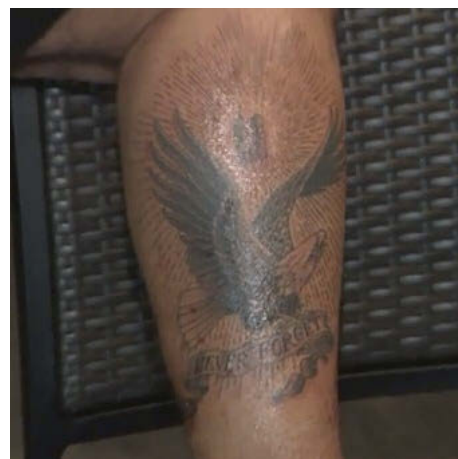
We've been picking up news stories about the latest trend – armpit tattoos (which are all over Pinterest and Instagram). Concern is being expressed in some quarters about the fact that ink from these tattoos can find its way into the lymph nodes in the armpit and make them change colour... which can set alarms bells ringing with regard to cancer when in fact you are perfectly healthy, or make a correct cancer diagnosis more difficult. The presence of tattoo ink in your skin also makes you sweat less, which contrary to what you might think is not always a good thing. Worth looking into in more detail if you are considering an armpit tattoo.

ARTIST WANTED

Sacred Art in Chorlton, Manchester are looking for a new artist to join their busy studio. If you are an experienced artist who specialises in black and grey tattooing, then please contact the studio via email at tattoo@sacredarttattoo.co.uk Please include examples of your work and some information about yourself.

TATTOOS FOR 9/11 SURVIVORS

July saw a very special tattoo event in New York. Eleven of the city's most well known tattoo artists got together to tattoo survivors of the 9/11 terror attacks and the emergency crews who helped them. Physical scars were covered with top quality artwork and mental scars were acknowledged too, as the eleven people were tattooed with designs that they themselves had created in collaboration with the artists. The event was organised by Artists 4 Israel, who describe their overall mission as bringing beauty, healing and protection to communities and people ravished by fighting through their arts and culture-based humanitarian aid, and helping all people, regardless of race, religion, gender or national origin, to overcome the struggles of living in crises. Following a similar event for victims of terrorism in Israel, they came to New York at the invitation of the Police Department and the Fire Department and the community of 9/11 survivors.



SHARING THE ANIMALS' PAIN

Australian vegan activist Dimitrios Kailaris recently took empathy to a whole new physical level by undergoing a phenomenal twenty-four hour tattoo challenge. His aim: to raise awareness of veganism, and raise funds for future projects, by very visibly sharing the pain endured by so many non-human animals. He was tattooed by four vegan artists – three of them simultaneously on one day, and one of them the day before. In interviews afterwards, he described the experience as among the toughest of his whole life. He said the pain was indescribable, but he kept thinking about all the animals who cannot walk away from pain inflicted on them by humans – and he told himself that he could not walk away either. He said the hardest part was when his nipples and belly button were being tattooed at the same time, and he had a difficult time recovering from the ordeal afterwards, but having VEGAN tattooed across his stomach makes him feel he is truly living and breathing the vegan philosophy. You can find out more at



www.gofundme.com/vegankids or email sacredscribble@gmail.com and you can read an interview with Dimitrios at www.plantbasednews.org/post/sharing-animals-unimaginable-pain-vegan-activist-does-24-hour-tattoo-challenge



TOTAL TATTOO AND THE BIG NORTH TATTOO SHOW ON INSTAGRAM

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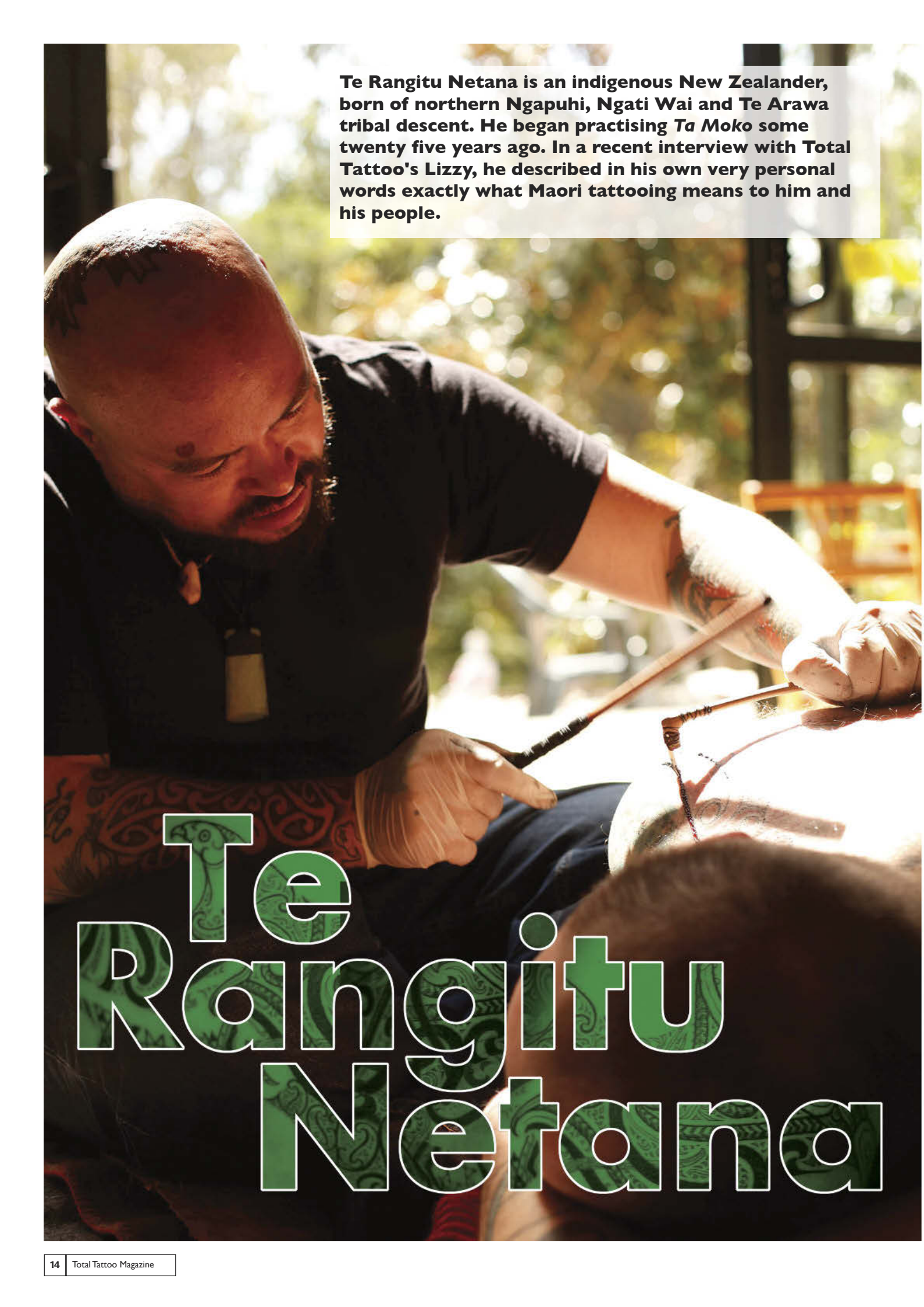
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A photograph of Te Rangitu Netana, a Maori tattoo artist, working on a client's back. He is wearing a black shirt and has a beard. He is using a traditional Maori tattooing tool (moko) to create a tattoo. The background is a bright, outdoor setting with trees and a wooden bench.

Te Rangitu Netana is an indigenous New Zealander, born of northern Ngapuhi, Ngati Wai and Te Arawa tribal descent. He began practising *Ta Moko* some twenty five years ago. In a recent interview with *Total Tattoo's* Lizzy, he described in his own very personal words exactly what Maori tattooing means to him and his people.

Te Rangitu Netana

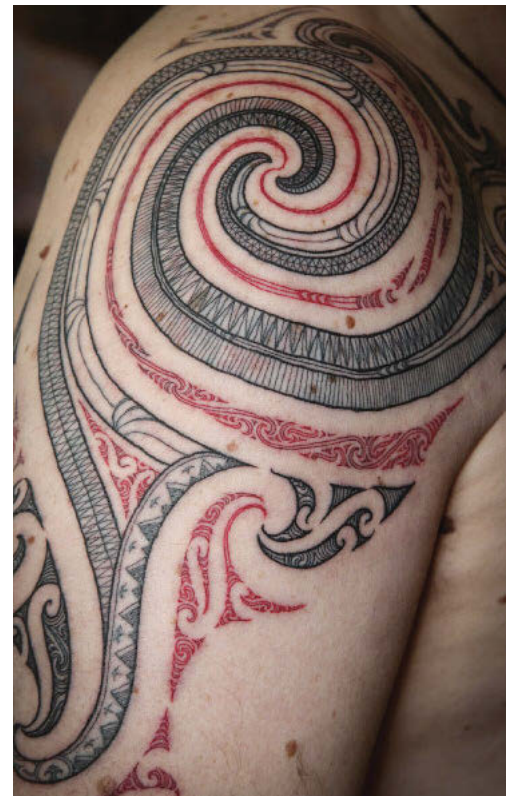
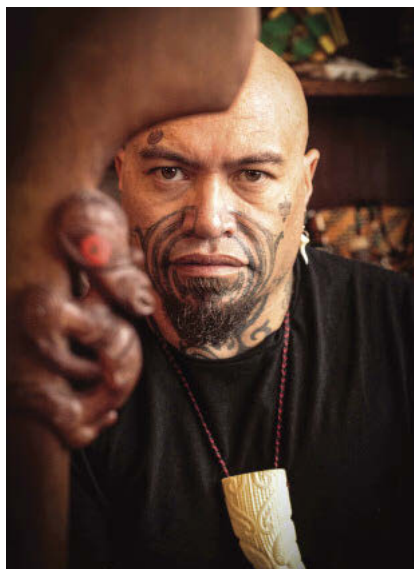


For Te Rangitu, practising *Ta Moko* [traditional tattooing] carries with it the responsibility of acknowledging his Maori beliefs and educating others in those beliefs too. He feels it is vitally important to respect his culture and its traditions, and to encourage that respect in others as well. When I arrived for our interview, he greeted me with a traditional welcome; he welcomed my ancestors, who were walking with me, and also his ancestors, who were gathering. Even though he is living away from New Zealand, he feels it is important to continue these traditional practices. "You're away from your culture so it seems a little weird sometimes," he says, "but you make sure you do it."

Te Rangitu is originally from the Whangarei area, which is the far north east of New Zealand's North Island. He has recently established himself permanently in Colchester, and I asked him what his reason was for relocating. "I met an English girl, basically!" was his diarming reply. "We met and fell in love back home, then had children and got married. She gave me twelve years in New Zealand but was missing England so we moved. It was hard for me because my traditional practice and responsibilities are integrated within our culture. I went to my elders and talked to them about our relationship and our children, and what we could gain from being in England. My elders were a bit apprehensive about letting me go, but they supported me and I'm very lucky."

Te Rangitu feels his role extends far beyond tattooing. "My job is to educate people. Back home, I would visit different schools, colleges

and universities and talk to the youth about the traditions and tattooing. I have also worked with other indigenous cultures, with people who have alcohol problems, and used tattooing to help people on their road to recovery. Often the whole family are involved, even the children, so they understand that it's a birthing process. We believe that when people are receiving pain they're at their most heightened state of consciousness. That's why we create a safe environment for the person to be in; you can't have negative music or people saying negative things because it can soak into the recipient as a memory. We encourage the family to stand and sing or speak about their lineage. We believe prayers and heredity are being laid into that person."

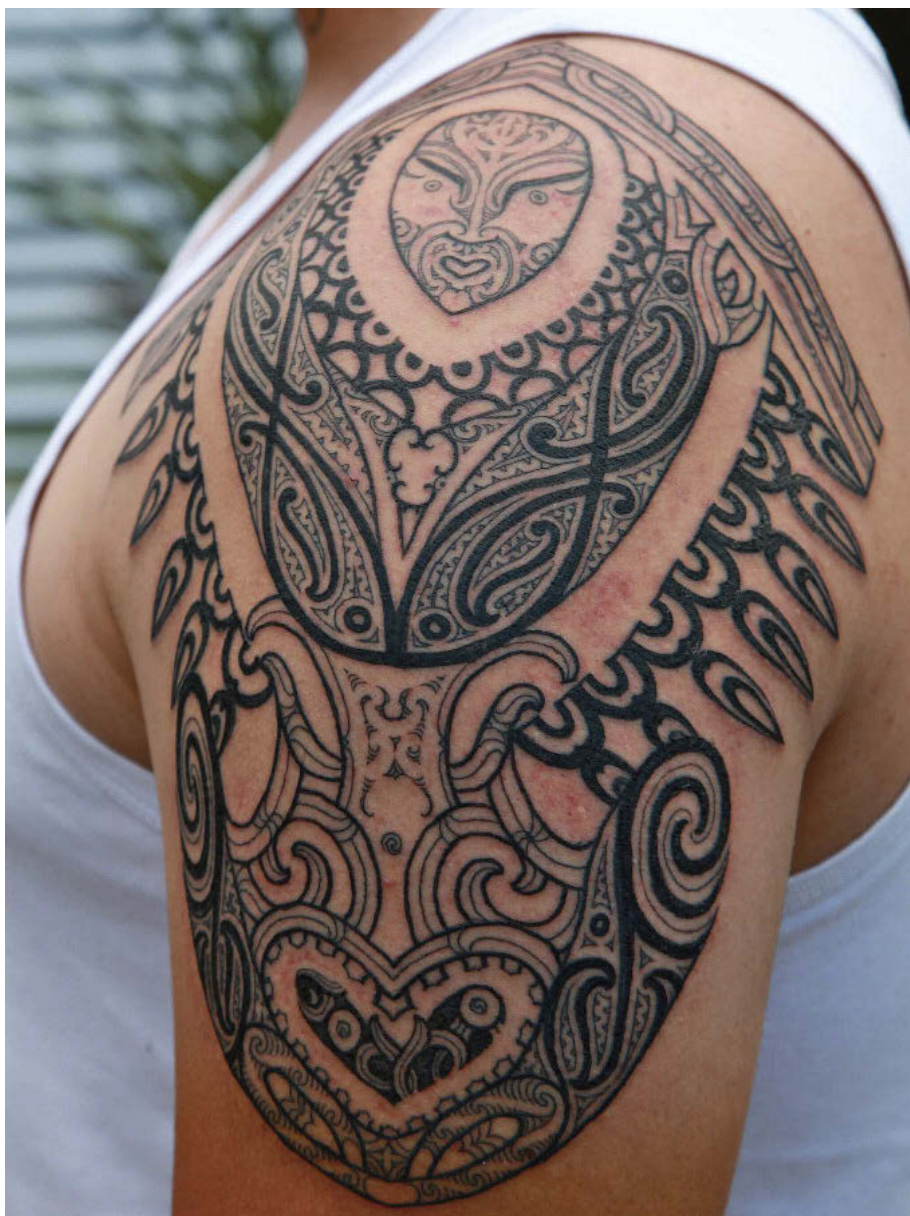


Interview by Lizzy
Pictures by Te Rangitu



I asked Te Rangitu what difficulties he has faced in coming to England. "I guess a hurdle is trying to survive here and do what I do," he tells me, "making sure it's relevant to be working here and tattooing Maori and non-Maori people. I've been back and forth to Europe through my whole career so England isn't a completely foreign place. But when you're laying your roots and expecting to stay for a while, it pulls a different way of thinking. The thing that I have noticed that may be needed in Europe is the kind of understanding of our traditional culture that knows we live and breathe it, that it's not just something we wear. I came over to Europe in the first place because we saw magazines and people wearing our work. I remember the meeting in New Zealand; it was a gathering of tattooists, academics and freedom fighters. We talked about what was happening and what we could do about it. We came to the conclusion that someone had to go out there, to show them how we are and what we believe. If we could show them how we are as a people, then the bastardisation of our work would stop. Two of us came over and worked at different shows and shops. We could see there was a positive change happening, but when we returned home the void that was left was filled and it reverted back."

I asked Te Rangitu to explain why Western tattooists shouldn't replicate Maori designs, and why this is seen as offensive. "In our culture it would be shameful to wear something that can't be read – to wear something that doesn't belong to you. It's important to understand and live what you're wearing. In the old times, it was about honour. It's about who we are, where we come from and who we belong to. We've had the struggle to get where we are, to bring about a renaissance with our culture and language. When you're dealing with that, you want to bring it back as perfectly as possible, because you've got to think of the next generations that have to survive from it. Since colonisation we've had to deal with fighting against our governments, and even amongst ourselves. I think New Zealand is quite



forward thinking in a lot of ways, so we're lucky; but even in our own culture we have people who just go for the money and cheapen it. It's nice to see people wearing Maori motifs, but you can tell if it's done properly. For instance, I've seen men wearing designs that belong to women. If they were to go to New Zealand, I honestly don't think they would be received well. Likewise, I've seen tribal patterns that combine two former enemy tribes and unless you're actually from those tribes and bind those two tribes within your lineage, that isn't good! We believe in our patterns, we know the history. There are slight differences in the patterns which, if not worn correctly, can be quite insulting - especially which angle certain things are pointing towards, because everything has a meaning and when it's laid on the body it should be in a certain way. There's certain ways that it shouldn't be; it would be bad karma and bad energy to have it that way. It's not 'spooky stories' to us; it's thousands of years of knowledge that's been passed on through generations."

In Te Rangitu's opinion, technical ability is not the issue; it's the misrepresentation and the exploitation of the art and the patterns. "If things could be done properly, then there would be a lot to learn - but it's being taken, not given," he says. "Maybe people feel that because they live on the other side of the world it won't affect the culture itself, but it's a mentality that affects us all. I know there are tattooists who want to do things right, in a positive way, but there are also a lot of tattooists who know the demand is there and that people are prepared to pay. Some of them stop calling it 'Polynesian' and give it another name with 'nesian' at the end and think that justifies it somehow. They make up new patterns and meanings, but what is their legacy? What are they leaving behind? How to disrespect another culture? I've had insults at conventions where people have said things to me like: 'Oh, I make a lot of money from you guys' and 'You tattooed Robbie Williams, I've made a lot of money from you'."

Our conversation moved on to the subject of celebrity tattooing, and sports celebrities in particular. Did Te Rangitu feel this was fuelling the demand for 'traditional' tattoos?

"Absolutely. I've had guys come to me wanting Sonny Bill Williams or The Rock's work. It doesn't matter who you are, you're not gonna look like The Rock! Those guys are Samoan, so they have culturally got a right to it. Traditionally, Sonny Bill Williams's *Pe'a* [traditional Samoan male *tatau*] would be worn on the leg, but he has it on his arm so it's in a modern context. However, it doesn't mean that those patterns don't have any meaning or relevance."

"I think it's really down to the tattooist to educate the client properly and say that it might not be appropriate," he continues. "A lot of people think 'Polynesian' is one thing.

We're from Polynesia, but there are many different cultures. We are related through time; some of our cultures are older and some are younger. Those patterns pertain to different islands, lineages and belief structures. But we evolved; in some places, some customs became irrelevant and there were reasons why we chose to change them. I like to respect my ancestors' decisions and not have the meanings between things get muddled up. There is a way of blending them together but you have to know your history and culture very well and it works better when the person has origins and ties to those separate cultures. Unfortunately even some of our own are adding to this mix. You have guys who are mixing the cultures because it's the trendy thing to do. It looks alright but unless it's been done to preserve and represent those cultures together for a reason, it's not correct. In a way, it's making the marks murky and unseeable."

I was keen to know whether, as a non-Maori, I would be entitled to wear a traditional Maori tattoo. Te Rangitu's response was that although we are from different cultures we are all human. "All people are connected. The common denominator between humans is Mother Nature. Our patterns come from her and her language. We have seventy two Gods, we have elements and parts of our make-up that we connect to through the Gods, which is our connection to the land. This is our way of writing it. So you can wear them, but there's an appropriate way of doing so. A lot of traditional tattoo work is not 'scary traditional', as some people may think it is. It can teach you about being a good person, about our connection to our environment, and how to approach life with your own ways of thinking and believing in yourself. It doesn't have to be heavy. In the initial stages of

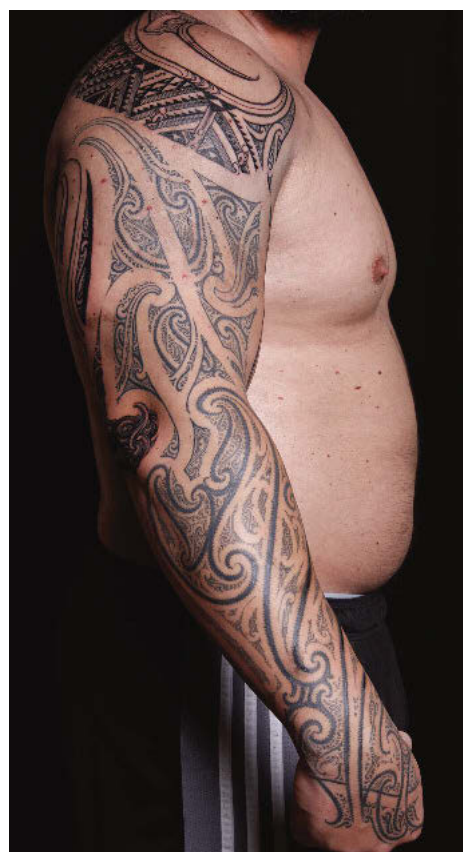
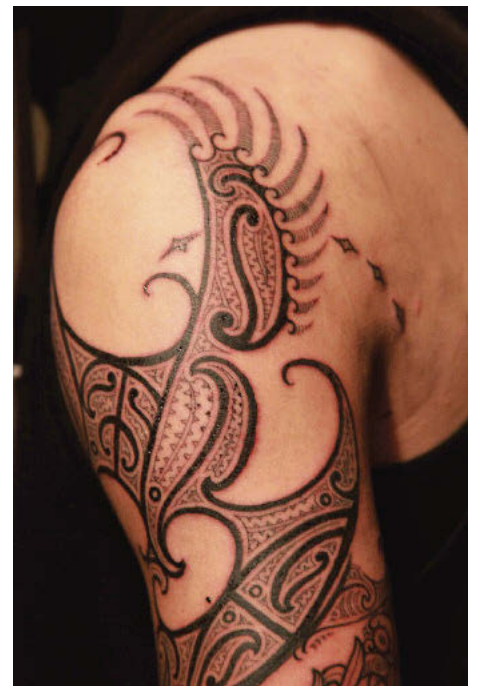


understanding it's best to make things light. Even though we are a traditional people, it doesn't mean that everything is set in stone. I think people get that confused about being 'traditional'; it's part of our tradition to evolve, to move, and to understand differences. When we're tattooed we're not going against society; we're joining society. There has been a disconnection between ourselves and our lands so it's about reconnecting ourselves."



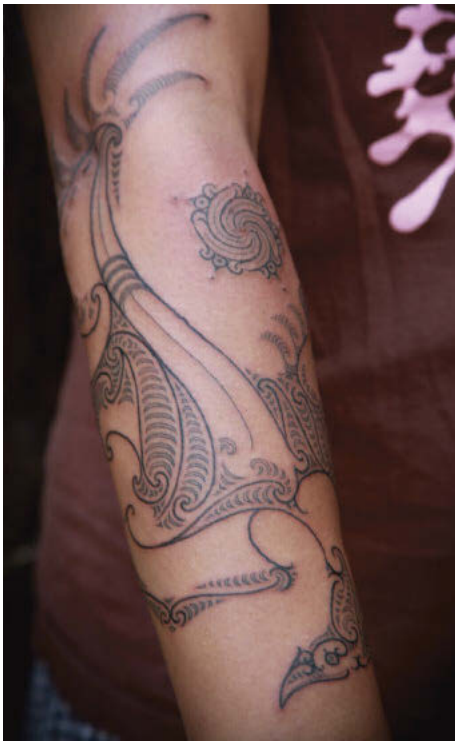
I wondered whether, in an ever-changing world, the language of the traditional patterns had also evolved? "Absolutely," Te Rangitu says. "There are the origins of the pattern and there's always new designs being made because we're dealing with a different environment. There are lineage patterns that contain maturaanga [knowledge] gifted to us from our ancestors that teach us about certain ways of thinking. Our patterns, depending on even the tribe or where you're from, may have a similar pattern that has a different name and meanings. If we go to a native meeting it can get quite heated if we're talking about our ancestors and something that's happened. One person will stand up and say 'My ancestor went to this place and saw this happen and this is what he reckoned', and someone else will stand and say 'No, that's not what happened, this happened', etc. The next thing will be four or five people standing up and they're all disputing the same subject. They're all right, but each of their ancestors took away a different perspective which they taught that lesson from and that's what it is to them. There's always different facets, different ways of looking at the same thing, so you get a clearer picture of what the problem or situation is. It's the same with our dialects; it may be the same word but it will slightly change because of something. So we do have patterns that have evolved or moved into a more modern way of thinking."

Maori tattooing is not something you learn from books or by going on a course. Te Rangitu learned his traditions through his family. "I was lucky to be born into a family who were very traditional. My grandmother always talked story and we always had to sit at



the feet of my grandfather when he was talking to the elders. At the time, it was torture! But that's how you were taught. We did our time on *marae* [our long houses] and during *hui* [gatherings]. Your whole life was based around your culture. If anybody was to become my apprentice, they would have to live with me, and live and breathe and do everything that I do. I lived with people who I consider leaders; I'd do carving and different arts. As a boy, I lived with Masters and I did whatever they said; whether it was washing the car or doing the garden. It's a way of life. Otherwise, it just disappears and our elders would die with that knowledge if the right person didn't come along."

I remarked that Western tattooists striving for authenticity don't seem to research Polynesian tattooing in the way that they would research Japanese tattooing, for example. "It's not really the same," Te Rangitu explains. We don't write books for the information to be out there, so I don't think there's much they can research. If there was, it would be like giving a knife to a child and telling them to run around with it. My job is to preserve the lineage and integrity of my traditions. I'm not too sure with Western tattooists if that's their intention or motivation. As Polynesians, tattooing is part of our religious make-up. It's strange how Westerners are looking at how our tattooing is now influencing our younger generations at home in New Zealand. I lived in an area which had its negative sides, like a lot of rural areas in New Zealand, and I could see the influences of the European way of thinking and the bastardisation of our culture and how that's affecting the youth. What they're seeing in magazines and online is a lot of disrespect. People complain about how the world is, but they don't even fix their own backyard; they're already in someone else's. Capitalism and even what's happened with our people with colonisation is still happening today. If you take something you'd want to give back, but that doesn't really happen."



For Te Rangitu, traditional tattooing isn't about earning a living. "We don't do it because we're going to get paid at the end of the day," he tells me. "We do it because we love our culture. It's our passion and just being able to be there is the honour. I don't know if people really understand that. If you can give something with passion, that should be enough. Money isn't everything! My house is filled with *taonga* [treasures] that have been given to me. And that's something else, because it comes with a story and it comes with so much more, that we call *mana*. It's rich and special for me and I love that my kids have been brought up with these things. A lot of the indigenous worlds that we work with in America and Canada, and the Aboriginal cultures of Australia, we're all the same and we all learn from each other and support each other. I like to think that we're getting stronger and stronger every year. I love that we all just give and we don't expect anything in return."

Te Rangitu is from a non-boastful culture, where it is not customary to talk about oneself. With this in mind, I asked him about the pressure and requirement for social media. "It's hard having to be on social media. I find it difficult to talk about myself so I always refer to my people. I am known mostly through traditional ways so, for example, I will work on four generations of the same family. That's a great honour for me because the grandparents have trusted me with not only their kids, but their grandchildren as well. There is a huge responsibility that comes with that; you have to make sure that you pull your head in and police yourself. You can't just go out and be drunk and do things that are negative because it reflects on everybody that you've worked on. If I was to suddenly take up drugs or get arrested, that would insult the whole of the people that I've tattooed. But I

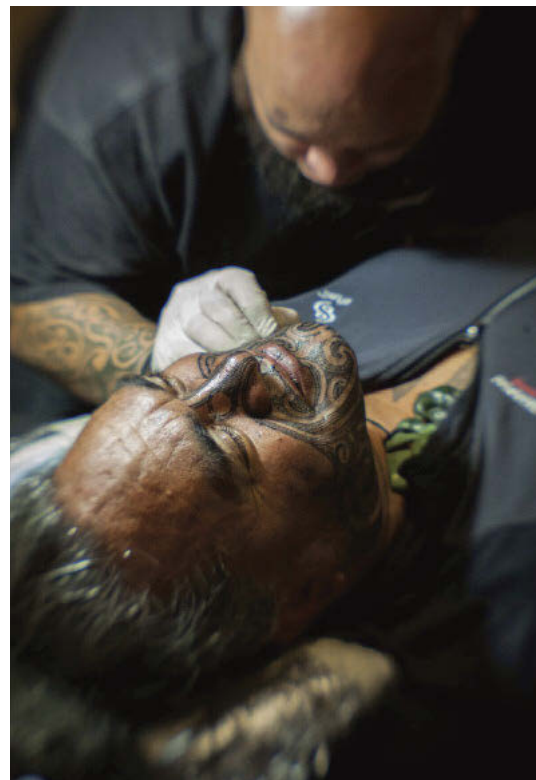
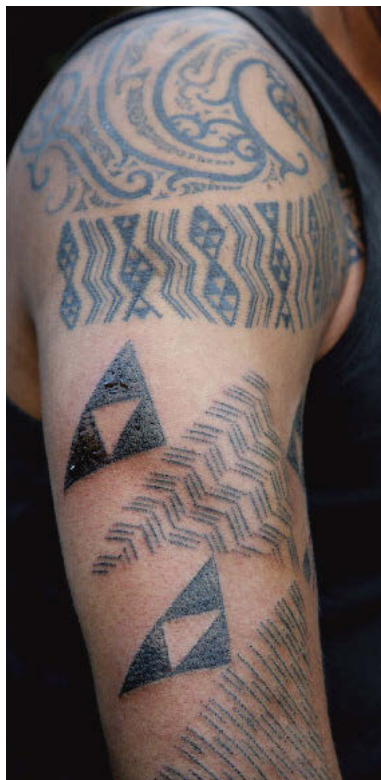
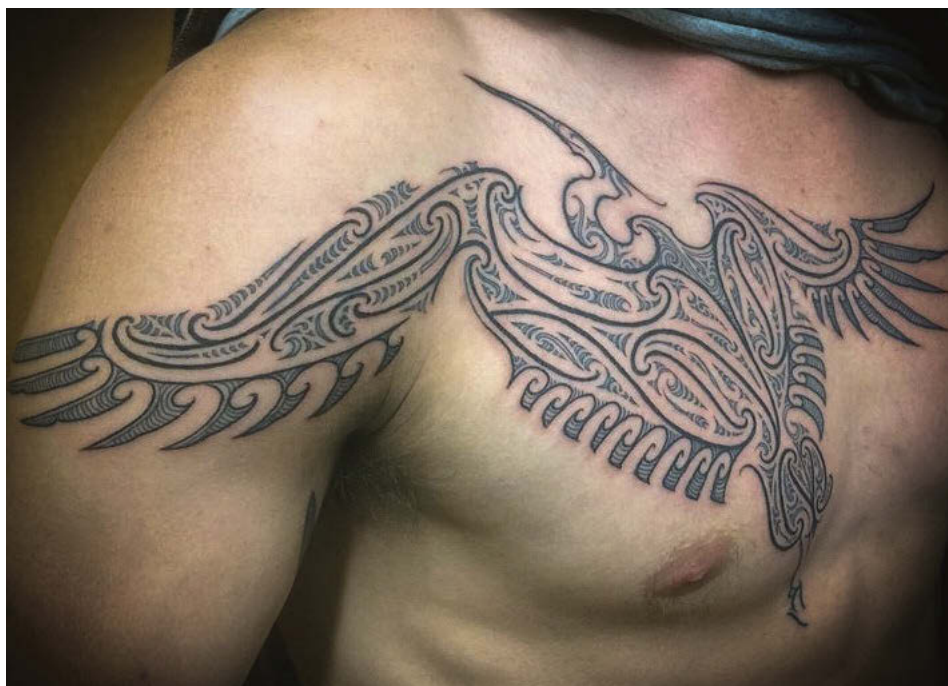


love it; I love the fact that I represent. I want my daughters to hear stories of me, the same way that I heard stories of my father and grandfather."

Whilst living in New Zealand, Te Rangitu successfully reintroduced hand tools to his area. In addition, he also put forward plans for the future to build traditional tattoo houses, instead of studios, where the tattooing could be performed. I asked him to tell me more about this. "I've been dedicated to it now for the last ten years. I originally started studying the traditional tools under a friend of mine, Keone Nunes, who is from Hawaii. It's a long story, but simply put, around twenty years ago,

in my area, there was nobody who was using hand tools. One part of my tribe approached the Samoan tatau master, Paulo Sulu'ape and asked whether he would consider helping bring the hand tools back for our people. There was a ceremony that was made where Paulo gave the tools, not to our people, but to the church. The church was to give them back to our people, as a gesture (as the church was the one who took them away). A

Maori/Samoan catholic priest, Father Tony Brown, who wore the Pe'a, returned the tools back to a relation of mine, Vern Rosieur, who then received the Pe'a from Paulo Suluape. Vern was the first of our people from our area to be taught. I have known Keone for many years; he was taught by Paulo also. I remember seeing Keone years later and talking to him about it and thinking that although Paulo was a good friend of mine and I had spent many times with him and around his work, I'd missed out on learning from him due to his untimely death and so Keone offered to teach me over in Hawaii. I lived there for about three months before moving back to New Zealand and travelling back and forth to learn as much as I could. I'm still learning and I will always be his friend and student."



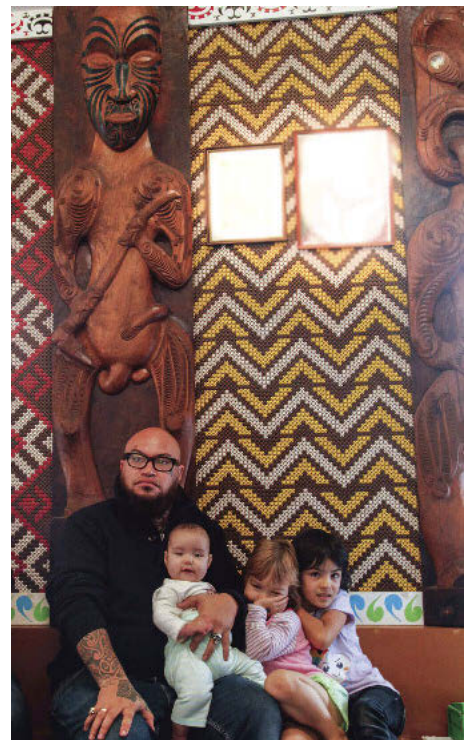
Te Rangitu went on to explain the differences between hand tools and machines. "The customs and traditions only pertain to the hand tools. There are a lot of things in the building and the collecting of the pieces and parts which are completely different to a machine. I think the patterns and messages slowly get lost with machines but it's different with the hand tools. They meld really well to our patterns. In fact, the machine has really changed the way that moko used to look like. You can tell a machine what to do because it's man-made. The hand tools, however, will tell you what to do."

"With hand tools it definitely is a different way of receiving a tattoo," Te Rangitu continues. "For instance, you have more than one person working on a client, whereas with a machine you have only one and it is an egotistical thing. Everybody massages that ego so it's very much 'look what I can do'. With the hand tools, the client, the person who is stretching, the environment... everything is inclusive. If I hadn't worked with the person who is stretching before, it takes a long time to start flowing. So you have to spend time together and you're as important as each other because one person is stretching the skin, whilst the other has to move. They have to know where you're going to go before you even move, so they have to know how you move and they have to know how to stretch properly to make the job easier for me and the client; the stretcher is stretching for them, not me."

I asked Te Rangitu whether there was a stronger relationship with the hand tools? "When you're building a hand tool it actually forms a character and they often form names. So they have temperaments and it's all to do with yourself as well; if you're not feeling right in the head then they're not going to work with you. They'll tell me off or what I'm doing wrong - they actually tell me what to do more than I tell them what to do! The tools will tell me where I can go, based on things like muscle structure, etc. For example, you could put three of the same designs on three people's chins and each one could look completely different because of the structure of the face. However, the machine will allow me to do those things. When we used to make machines it was a process that taught me a lot. I still love working with my machines. I love all kinds of marking the skin; I find it fascinating. Maybe they represent two sides of me: my practitioner side keeping a tradition going and my artist side. The machine allows me to be an artist and create and push boundaries."

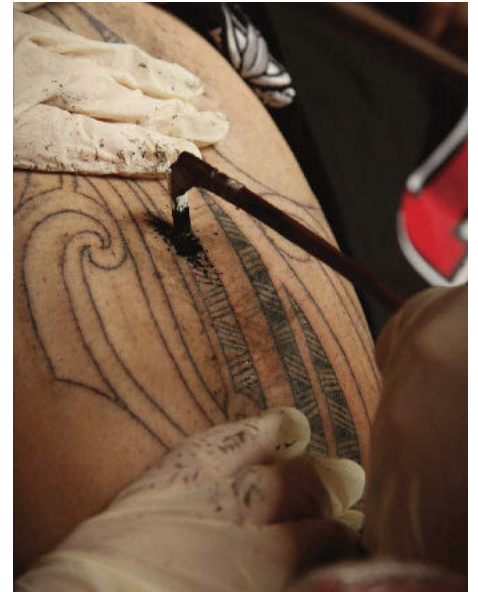
We moved on to discuss the consultation process. Understandably, when getting a traditional tattoo, this process takes longer and is more in-depth than regular, custom tattooing. "Getting to know my clients is the main thing," Te Rangitu tells me. "It's not as easy as just coming in and choosing a picture,

because they want something that is unique to them. The first part is getting to know the customer as a person, which is sometimes difficult because people don't like talking about their personal lives. So trying to draw it out is the hardest part and takes as long as it takes - there is no time limit. We talk over the information, and as they're talking it over I'll come up with ideas and we'll start forming the design. I'll then work on it some more and think about it. Sometimes it can come to me in a dream and it's a go-ahead. But if things aren't feeling right, then I won't do it. So it does all depend on whether things are right and whether they fall into place. That's a part of the artform that people don't talk about so much; if something feels wrong, you need to be able to figure it out, in terms of the design, person or subject. It's internalised a lot and because you're dealing with something so sacred and a person's body, you have to go through the consultation process slowly. We then look at the build of the person, the muscle structure and how it sits, as well as the reasons why it would be on that part of the



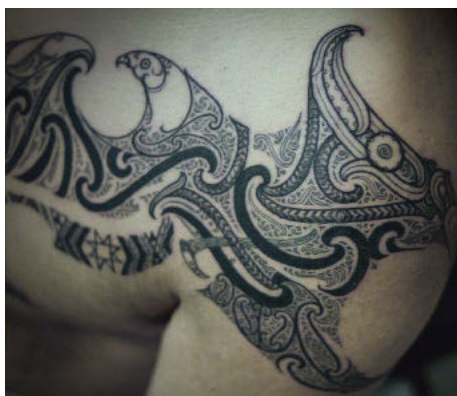
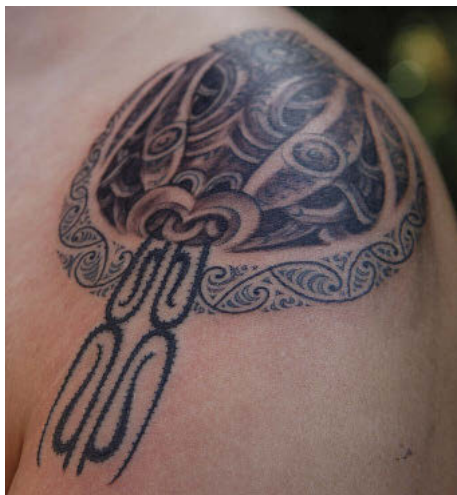


reignite our worlds. I also hope that my daughters can continue the legacy of looking after our people and the integrity of the culture."



body. There are reasons as to why you would have something on your right or left as there are female sides and male sides. It's got to make sense - so if my elders were to read it, they would be able to make sense of it. So I'm always thinking, 'Does this part of the story fit there?', as well as considering the wearer's job and how they use their body."

As our conversation started to draw to a close, I asked Te Rangitu about his future plans. "If there is something I would like to achieve, it is possibly to inspire and help people in Europe to regain more of their own original traditions in a way that is inclusive of other cultures, in the same way that we as indigenous cultures are coming together to help each other do the same. I'd love to travel and be able to tattoo elsewhere, such as outdoors with nature. It would be great to say that I've been to and tattooed in sacred spaces. I think it takes that type of thinking to



Finally, I asked Te Rangitu if he had a message for those who were considering Maori tattooing. "I guess it would be nice if our culture was left for us, because we have the lineage and the things that have been given to us," is his heartfelt reply. "We were born and brought up with it and so much has been taken from our people. These are the things that we are using to heal our people and the wounds that were caused by colonialism. We were told at one time that we weren't even human. My grandfather was very traditional. My grandfathers before that were beaten and my father was partially paralysed in his arm for speaking our language. The effects of these things are still happening today. So if I could say something to my friends who are out there tattooing, who are saying that they have some kind of connection to Maori, it would be to leave it alone, let us deal with our culture, otherwise it's not helping anybody. I have no problems with people wanting to understand and know things and if people ask me I will tell them. But I don't expect them to then move down the road and start tattooing. I didn't mean to come over here and get into arguments *[laughs]* but it is political for us. It's not as easy as 'just being a tattooist' because we represent a people. I'm one that's here but I need to say something, as a lot of people in our culture feel like this. So I have to challenge people and I have to stand up and say 'I don't think this is a good thing'."

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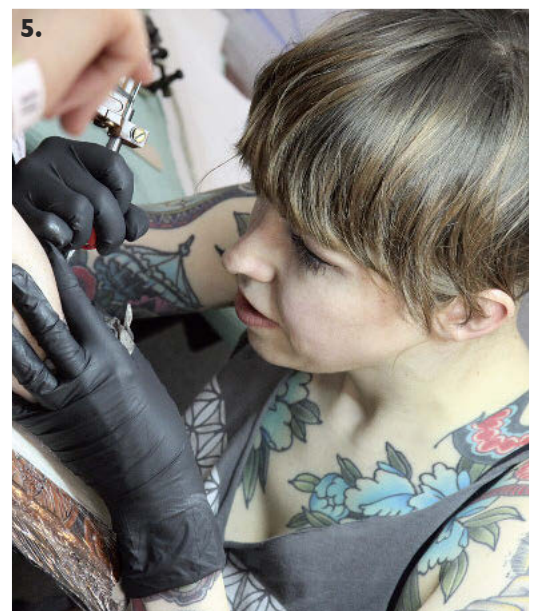
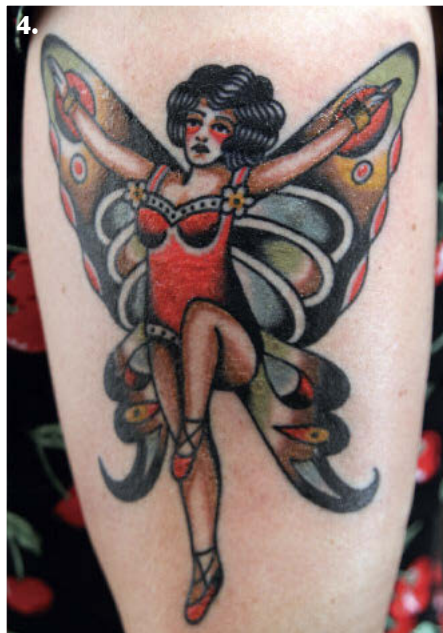
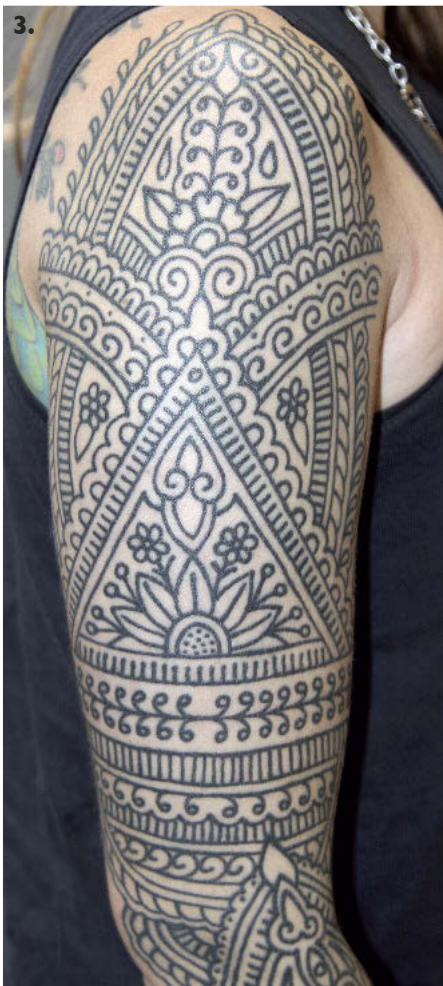
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222



1. marcus, broad street tattoo
2. filip leu & luke atkinson art
3. dan frye, angelic hell
4. nate hudak,
crying heart tattoo (usa)
5. flo nuttall
6. ck low (singapore)
7. filip leu & luke atkinson art
8. ash davies, stronghold

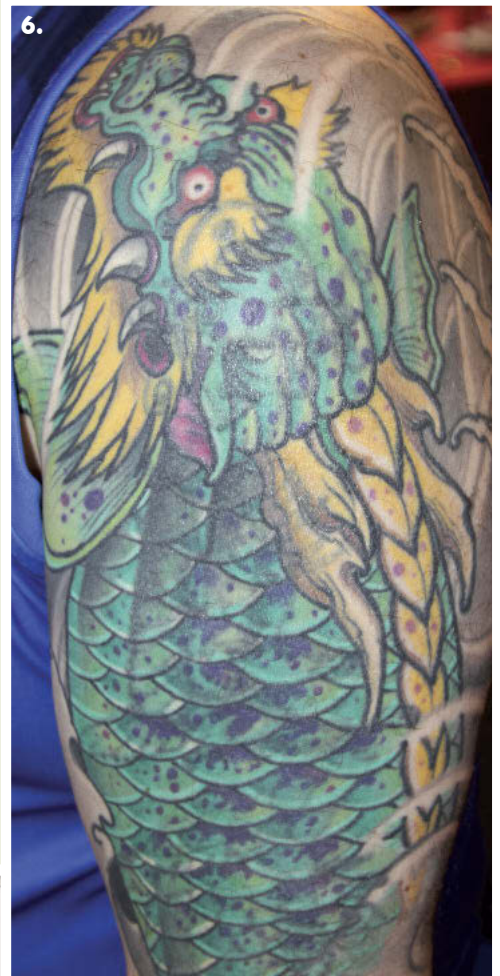
BRISTOL TATTOO CONVENTION

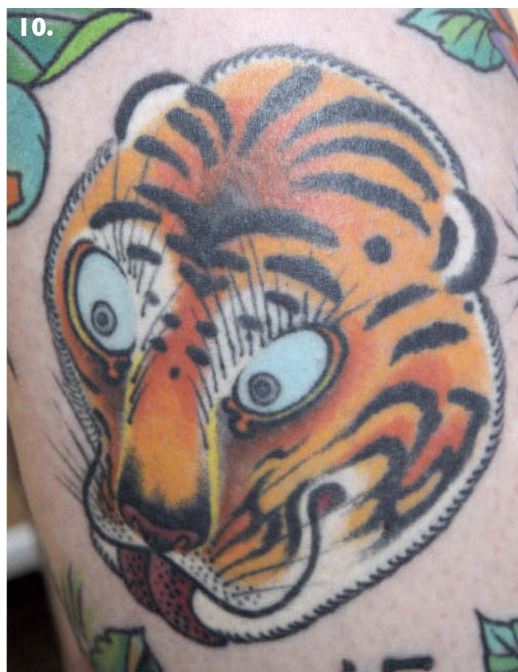
Sometimes you need to strip back the familiar razzle dazzle of tattoo conventions – the entertainment, the competitions – and get back to a true core of pure tattooing. And once again, Bristol has nailed it.

A stunning hand-painted Dapper Sign greeted the crowds of tattoo lovers as they entered Brunel's Old Station. This venue is perfectly for a tattoo event. It's full of character, it feels spacious and open, and above all it's light. For a lot of conventions, a 'no-frills' approach simply wouldn't work, but for this show it really does. This is mostly down to the fact that it's all organised by Fil, a tattooer who is truly passionate about the craft and culture of tattooing. He and the incredibly hard-working stewards made sure everyone – whether working or attending – enjoyed themselves immensely. The atmosphere was alive with laughter and smiles, and a wonderful sense of mutual respect.

Although the format of the convention was very 'old school' in its approach, it celebrated a whole variety of tattoo styles. As well as the traditional, there was a noticeable presence of dotwork, heavy blackwork, black and grey realism, and Japanese. Throughout the weekend, most artists were busy. Because there were no competitions, there were no egos – the tattooists just wanted to tattoo and have fun doing so. As well as studios from the UK, a number of studios from Italy, USA and Germany were also present.

The artists were hand-picked, with only 150 spaces available. Because of this, Bristol is a very sought-after show for any studio to attend. Fil makes a conscious effort to balance returning artists with new faces, which keeps the artist list fresh and exciting every year. It was great to see returning talent from Frith Street, Eightfold and the Italian Rooster; as well as work from Owen Paulls, Hannah Louise Clark (Rain City) and Andreas Coenen (The Sinner and the Saint). Although the convention recognised the global talent in tattooing, there was a good representation of local studios, such as Skin Deep and Broad Street, who were also producing excellent work throughout the weekend.





There was a bar at the far end of the building, serving a variety of alcoholic and soft drinks, and there were trade stalls to tempt the convention goers from their cash. And the artists weren't forgotten, as there was a range of hand-picked suppliers in attendance too. One notable presence was Black Claw needles, the new project of Seth Ciferri and Wes, and a product that has been an instant hit with tattooists. These needles sold like hotcakes, and by Sunday afternoon the stock was sold out.

Every year, the Bristol Convention hosts an art exhibition – located towards the end of the building, near the bar and seating area. This year, we were treated to the beautiful paintings of Jo Harrison and Hanumantra from Unlty. Jo's realistic portraits of famous figures combined with Hanumantra's heavy tribal designs were a perfect collaborative effort, resulting in stunning pieces of art. In addition, we were presented with the debut appearance of sixteen large-scale prints by Filip Leu and Luke Atkinson. Their distinctive series of dragons and demons was in perfect contrast to the neighbouring display and really emphasised the multifaceted artistic talent that is so prevalent in tattooing today. Whilst representing the contemporary, this convention also paid homage to the past. Jimmie Skuse and the Bristol Tattoo Club were present, with an excellent display as always, and for those who hadn't yet made it to this year's major tattoo exhibition at the National Maritime Museum Cornwall, there was a 'taster' exhibit.

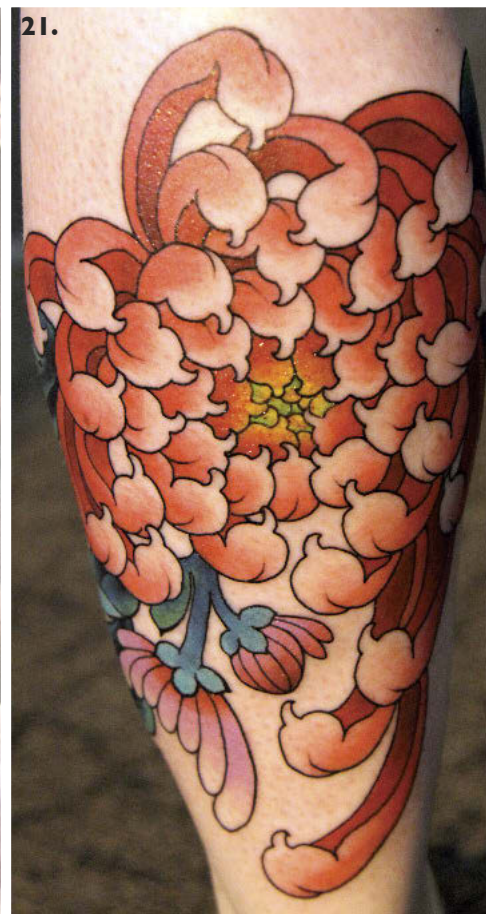
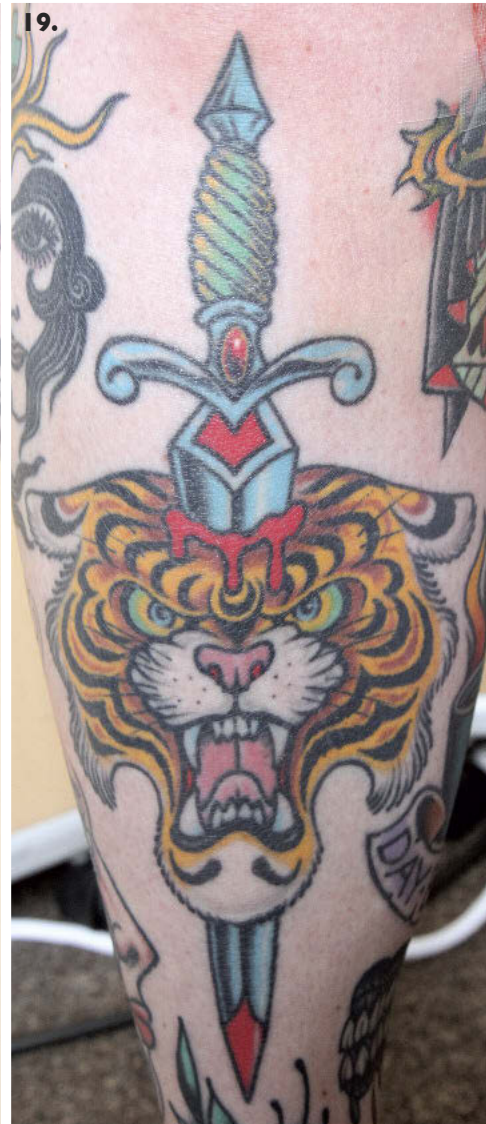
As in previous years, this show was a success from start to finish, and was packed with tattoo fans throughout. Before we knew it, the weekend was over and all too quickly it was time to head home. A proper convention for proper tattooing, Bristol remains one of my favourites on the circuit.





9. curly working
 10. ian flower, new skool tattoo
 11. neil bass, tattoo fx
 12. costa dan, north sea tattoo
 13-15. anrijs straume, bold as brass
 16. jean le roux, black garden
 17. charlie ayres, skin deep tattoo

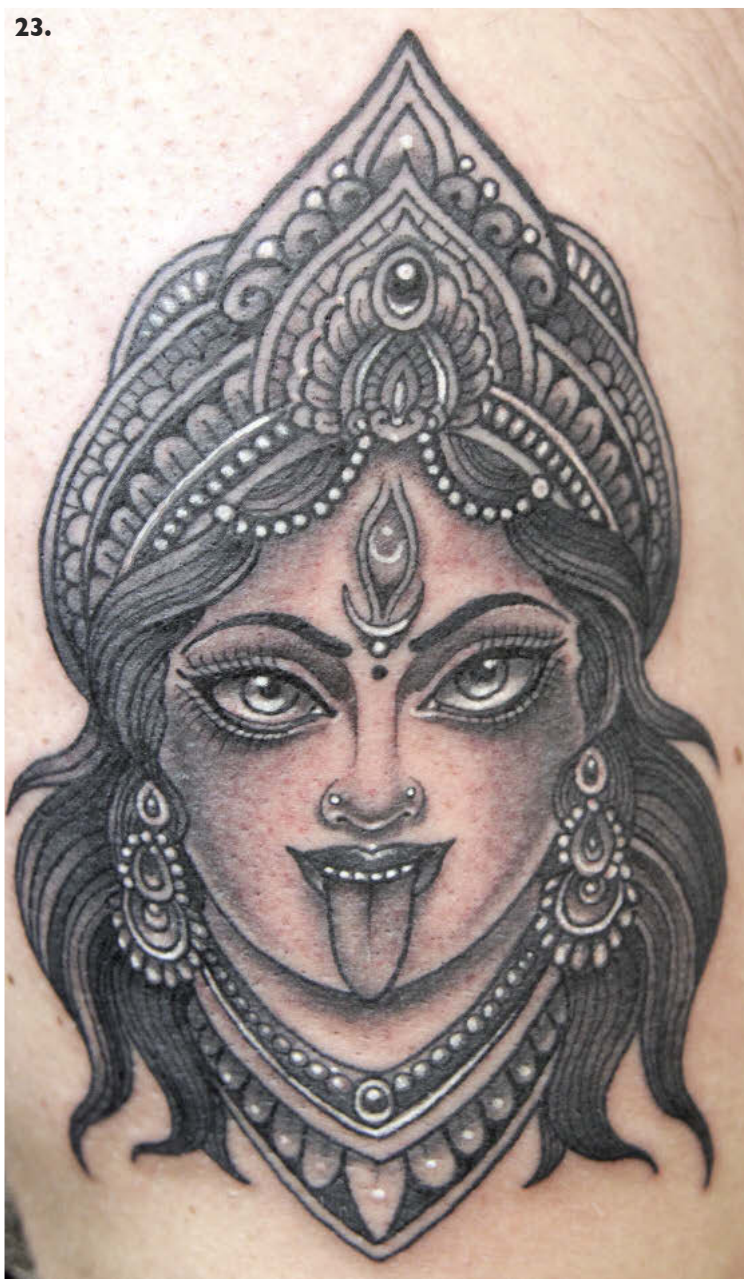




22.



23.



18. jordan teear, frith street
 19. jordan teear, frith street
 20. jo harrison & hanumantra art exhibit
 21. olivia chell, insider tattoo
 22. dan stefano, frith street
 23. flo nuttall, psycho tattoo (italy)
 24. costa dan, north sea tattoo
 25. boxcar, electric anvil tattoo (usa)

24.



25.



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Interview by Perry • Pictures courtesy of Seth Ciferri

SETH CIFERRI

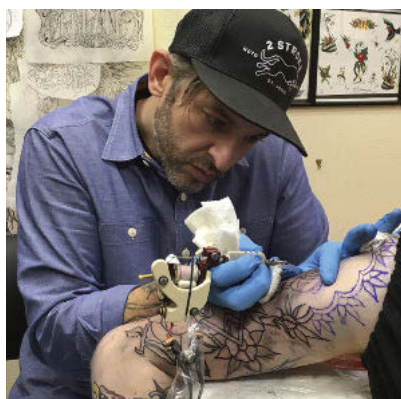
Seth Ciferri is a modern machine-building legend. Tattooist and innovator, he's a man on a mission to protect and promote all that is great about our industry. And he's a thoroughly decent bloke to boot.

Seth, you grew up on America's East Coast...

Yeah, I grew up mostly in New York, with some time in Florida and New Jersey too, before finally settling in Maryland. My family kind of left when I was around eighteen, but I chose to stay there. I started tattooing and eventually had kids, and then I began to feel like maybe I was stuck there! But I realised I wasn't, and I moved to Spain for a little while at the end of 2007. In the summer of 2008 I moved to Portland, Oregon, and I've been there for about nine years now.

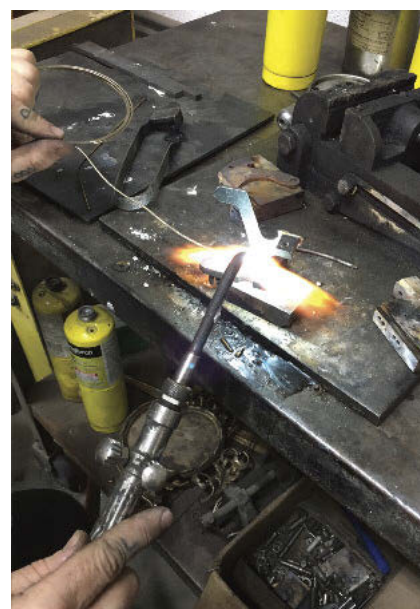
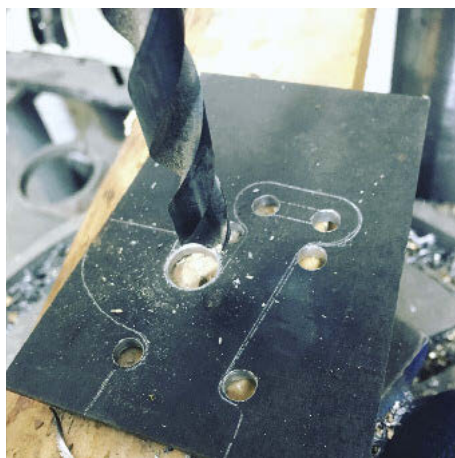
Which came first for you, tattooing or machine-building?

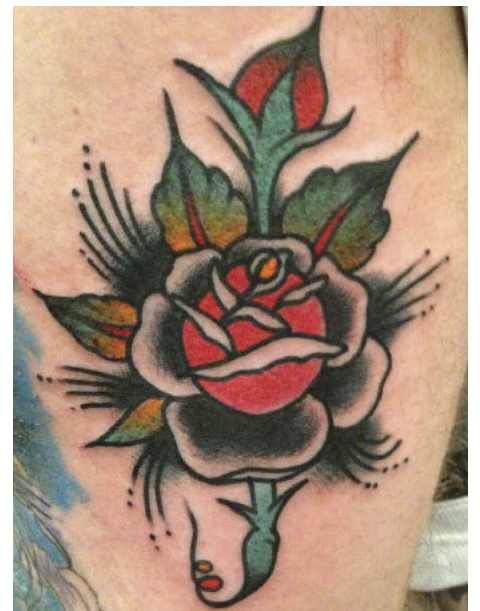
They both happened at about the same time. I was that guy who couldn't leave anything alone! Especially as a kid, if anyone handed me anything, straight away I would take it apart. So naturally it followed that as soon as I started tattooing, I immediately started taking the machines apart. The other guys in the shop were of the generation that never worked on their own equipment – everything came from the supplier – so there was a kind of lack of engagement. They never made needles, mixed pigment or built machines. There was a small handful of machine builders at that time, but this was pre-internet, so it hadn't reached that point where it was ready to explode. I started tattooing in '93 and started assembling machines in '94 – tuning them and setting them up – then over the next few years I started doing castings and making frames.



How did you learn about machine-building?

It was all done by trial and error. I bought machines from people I knew made good ones, and I learnt a lot that way. One of the guys I tattooed with had some original Paul Rogers machines, and there were a lot of Paul Rogers bits around the shop, but of course at that time I had no idea of the significance of this, or what an amazing opportunity it was. Later on I was fortunate enough to get tattooed by Tom Beasley, who was also good friends with Paul and had a lot of his machines. Being able to study that stuff, ask questions and get tattooed by those machines... as each month went by I slowly gained more knowledge. It was like light bulbs going on! But the more I learned, the more I realised how little I knew. I met a guy called Clay Decker who had some beautiful handmade machines, one of which was by Aaron Cain. It became my goal to build a machine as good as that Aaron Cain machine. I went to work at a shop called Little Vinnies; I knew that Aaron sometimes worked there and I figured it would only be a matter of time before our paths crossed. I was also corresponding with Mike Malone, and he was complaining that Spaulding frames had become thinner and lighter, so we talked about the need to have some decent frames made. At his behest, I went ahead and had a hundred frames cast and sent half of them to Malone. Every one of them broke because I'd specified the wrong kind of iron and if you dropped it from table height it would shatter! That was a really big lesson learnt – that I needed to know about every aspect of every element of the process.





And it just grew from there?

Yes. People started asking me for machines. And I was getting tattooed more, and buying more machines, and teaching myself along the way. But when the internet came along, and we began to share our knowledge in online forums, we soon realised that if you told people what you were working on you would create competition for yourself. It really didn't occur to me that people would simply copy what we were doing. There was the idea of putting short coils on a full frame with a quarter inch yoke. But you couldn't buy a quarter inch yoke, so we started making them. It became something of a signature build for us, then once it hit the 'public domain' it quickly became an industry standard. What I've noticed is that if I ever mention an idea to another machine builder, they instantly say 'Oh, I've tried that' then immediately make a note to go home and do it, often 'forgetting' where they'd gotten that idea.

Does this kind of plagiarism trouble you?

No, I try not to give it too much thought. Obviously the bits and pieces are there for everyone to see on the machines that I sell, but I tend not to talk about what I'm up to, and I don't put stuff out there on social media. These days, the inventive stuff stays close to home.

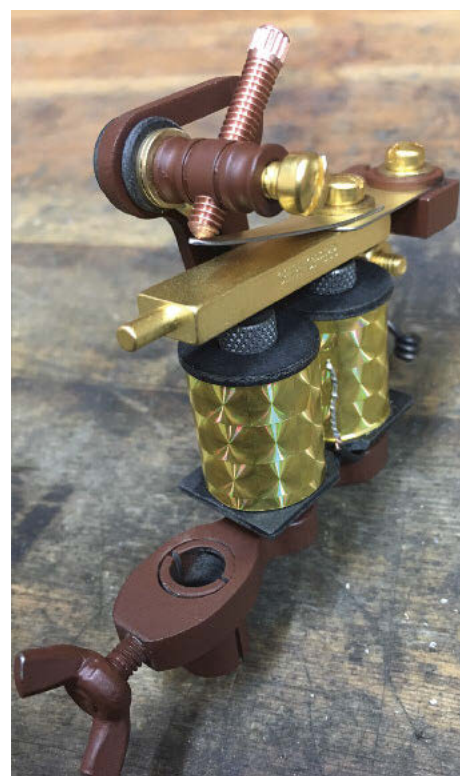


How have your machines developed over the years?

At first it was all about evolution and development, but then I think things kind of lagged a bit, as they do. We all have peaks and troughs, and there was a period when my head really wasn't on straight and my motivation wasn't entirely where it should have been. At first it was 'Learn as much as you can to make really good machines', then it was 'Holy shit! This is the first time you've ever had money. And there's more to be made! You can do really well at this!' Then it was trying to keep up with the demand; then it was trying to create more demand; and then it was realising that there wasn't actually the demand you thought there was. It was all about getting the balance right and not over-saturating the market. You also have to understand individual tattooists' different needs, and be able to accommodate them.

What do you feel about today's younger generation of tattooists, many of whom don't really know about the technical aspects of their equipment?

In spite of their lack of knowledge, their ability to apply tattoos is incredible. I think a lot of that is down to the availability of good equipment. There's no guesswork now. It used to be that you made your needles as good as you could, and worked with them as they were. You never knew if they should be better; you had nobody to ask. And you never knew if there was a better machine available, or a company selling better pigment. Nowadays, if you can't follow the formula and produce a good tattoo with the pigments, needles and machines available today, then you really should just hang it up. Because there are no technical limitations anymore.

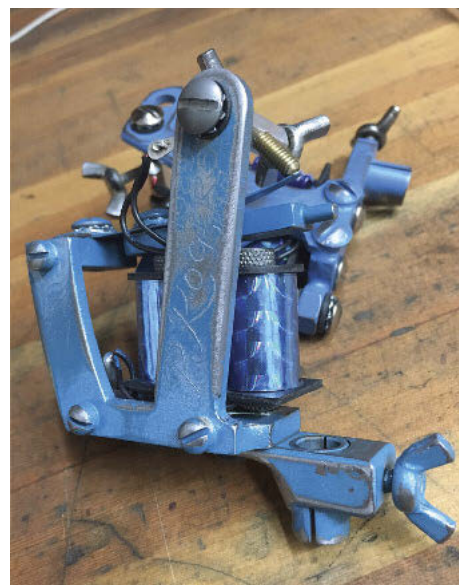
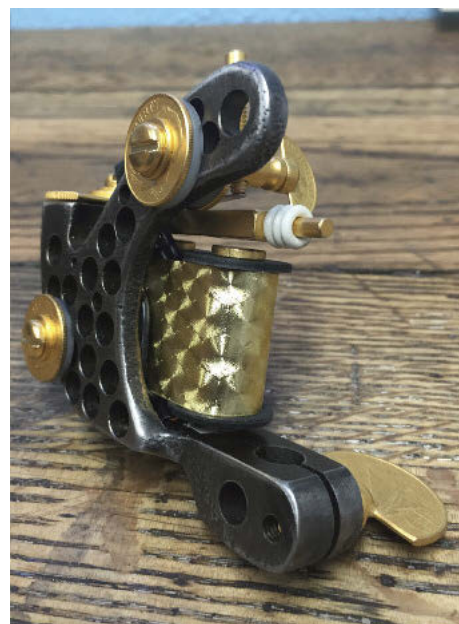


So what's the most important thing for a budding young tattooist to learn?

Learn to make needles. It's not that you need to know how to make them, but you need to know why they're made the way they are. The needle is the connection between the artist and the customer. More than anything else, knowing your needles is the way to improve your tattooing. When pre-made needles first became available, I was working in a really busy shop and the biggest problem was that everyone became really lazy! Personally, I found the pre-mades were soldered too far up to the tip and they were really rigid. I found that I was damaging the skin. In fact, I became so frustrated I didn't want to tattoo. The liners were like nails and the shaders were like chisels. They had no organic give or flex. Now that the needles have improved, tattoos heal better and heal brighter.

What's a typical set-up for one of your standard liners?

Typically, I would set it up to suit myself. For larger stuff, pretty fast, pretty hard but I suppose that can mean anything, because 'fast', 'slow' or anything like that is truly subjective. I have certain parameters I shoot for when I build and tune machines. There are things I have to consider; such as making sure the frame is long enough to have room for the springs and armature bar required for a given need. If the frame is too short, subsequently making the springs and a-bar short, we end up with a shortage of mass, which reduces inertia/momentum, resulting in a machine that doesn't hit hard enough to push a loose 11. What typically happens is that a tattooist will ask too much of their machine, above and beyond its capabilities, causing prematurely broken springs.





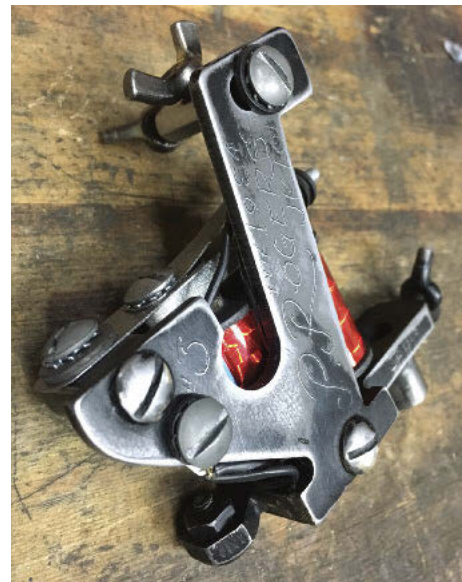
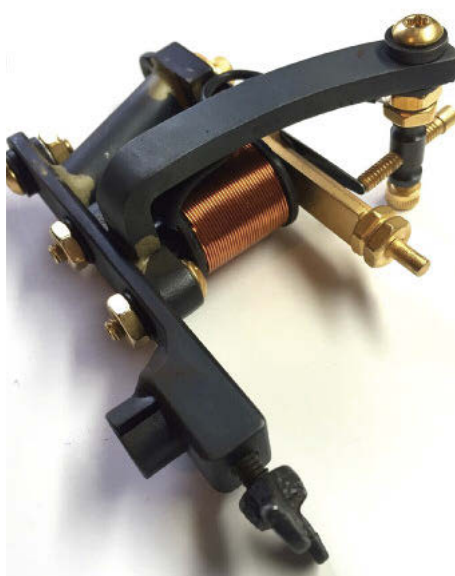
But it's not about my tattooing style; it's just my approach to the mechanics of it. (My tattooing style and Aaron Cain's tattooing style are completely different, but we both use a tattoo machine in the same way, so I can use his machines and he could use mine.) The set-up will be determined by the amount of saturation, the speed I move my hand, the pigment that I'm using, and of course the needles. Someone might tell me they want a machine for primarily black-and-grey. I use grey wash and mix as I go, and I like my machine to be fast but soft, so I set the machine for that. There are a lot of variables.

Do you still tattoo very much?

I wish I had more time to do it! So much energy goes on other things now – like family, and Black Claw. I aim to tattoo one day a week, and I do kind of miss it. But I find it difficult to work on one piece for four or five hours. I have ADHD and it's difficult for me to slow down and focus for any real length of time. I'm working on that.

Tell us about Black Claw...

Black Claw's mission is to promote and protect tattooing, through dedication to innovation and responsibility. Grime is my partner, and we founded the company in an effort to take care of tattooing in every way we can. Cultural vampires and interlopers have been meddling in our affairs for far too long, with the vast majority of them acting simply as middlemen, being the link between substandard imports and trusting tattooers. Of course there are some exceptions, but most are there to take advantage of us and our peers. Then of course, you have someone like Dante at Deluxe Supply in London, who's clearly dedicated and invested in tattooing, covered neck to toes, and running a great shop with great people. But he's a rarity. It's the ones who would never even think of getting tattoos who really should just find a new subculture to exploit.



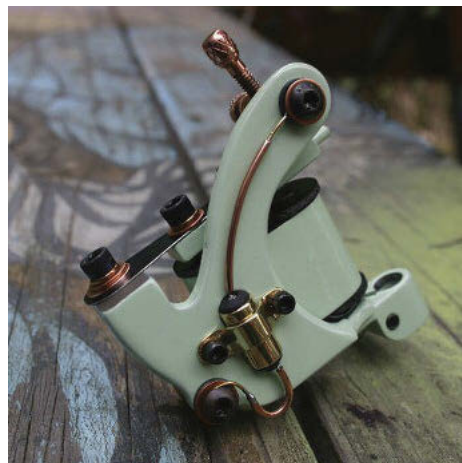
We started with bringing superior needles to the community – needles that would allow tattooers to relax in the knowledge that they were using the best and safest needles you could get. We were actually called "Black Claw Needle", but we soon realised that needles were not the end of the road for us – more the beginning.

Do you feel a pressure to constantly reinvent yourself to stay ahead of the game?

No, not really. I used to, but what I realised is that it's not about staying at the top, it's more about bringing new ideas to the table. There's a bit of competitive spirit though. I'm not interested in selling the most machines. I just want to do what I do, to the best of my own ability. I don't want to be the best machine builder – I want to be the best me. It's like tattoo competitions at conventions. I'd prefer not to have them. I feel that competitions bring out a kind of 'jock' mentality and that's not what attracted me to tattooing.

Are you ever tempted to mass produce and go for the money?

No. I always ask myself 'What would Grime do?' I have a lot of respect for him – and I don't want to lose respect from him. So I remind myself of what's important and what's not. I guess I could mass produce and get quite rich, but at what cost? There's a price to pay for earning that kind of money.



Tell us about your frames.

Some of them are made by Workhorse Irons, which was a company I started with my friend BJ 'Soba' Johnson, which is based in Michigan. They make my CNC (one piece) frames, as well as my castings. I make all the other frames in my workshop, which is near my house in Portland. Making the frames is my favourite part of the job. I typically work with scraps of steel, brass, iron, or whatever I happen to find while exploring estate sales or junkyards. It's a creative outlet for me and I really enjoy the freedom of working with a torch.

How does the business work?

The way I do it, I only make a machine when I want to. And when that machine's finished, it's for sale. I don't take orders, because then I owe something. Beforehand, people would sometimes mail me a cheque and I'd lose it, or it would end up in the laundry and be forgotten. A year later I'd run into them and wonder why they seemed angry with me!

Years ago I made a bad decision when I was contacted by a distributor who wanted a hundred machines. I thought: "Damn, that's a lot of money. I'm going to go for it." In the rush to make all these machines to a deadline, I'd forgotten what was so important to me in the first place. There's no magic in that kind of process. No authenticity or love. I feel it damaged my reputation and it's taken a long time to recover from that lesson.

I make fewer machines now, but better ones.



It's easy to find yourself irrelevant in this industry and that's not somewhere I want to be. It's important to me that I respect the business, be protective of tattooing, and honour those who wish to use the tools I make, by giving them my best efforts.

I hear you're currently working on a spring system for coil machines?

I can't really talk about it, except to say that it will make rear springs unbreakable – which has always been the biggest drawback with coil machines. What I'm working on now should hopefully mean never having to send a machine back to be fixed.

Do you ever use rotaries?

No, I don't use them, but if I started tattooing more and did use them I would probably explore building rotaries. For now, I'd feel like a fraud selling something with no intention of using it myself.

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cover model profile Julia Hart

Our cover model this month is American special fx make-up artist Julia Hart, who loves blood and gore, The Eagles and being a single mum.

How would you describe yourself and your style?

I'd describe myself as a sweetheart, a snack queen, a cuddle monster, and a procrastinating free spirit. My style is a mixture of things really. On most days, I'm a jeans and t-shirts kinda girl but when its time to doll up, I love throwing on the heels and red lipstick.

Who inspires you and your style?

As a young girl I really adored Marilyn Monroe, Gwen Stefani and Pamela Anderson. I'm super inspired by powerful, pretty women with original style and sex appeal.

What do you do in your spare time?

I don't get much spare time, being a full-time working single mum, but I'll take any chance I can to either get outdoors into nature, or crawl into my bed and binge watch movies.

What type of music do you listen to?

I love music and I constantly have it on. I don't think there's many genres I dislike. A few favourites would be classic rock, metal, gangster rap, 80s or 90s anything, and some country. My favourite band is The Eagles.

When did you become a make-up artist?

Right out of high school I did a year long masters course which taught me beauty and special fx make-up. Shortly after that I started taking on freelance jobs and working for various make-up brands. I have the most fun doing special fx – I love the blood and gore – but beauty make-up is definitely a more common job to come by.

When did you start modeling?

Back in 2007, when I did Suicide Girls. My first shoot was in Montreal, Canada, at an old martini bar. I remember being so nervous and unsure of myself. But when it was finished I felt liberated and empowered. My confidence level shot up, and that was when I knew that I was going to be model.

What are you most passionate about?

Definitely being a mum. I put my all into it and I really strive to raise a good little human. I am also super passionate about my career. It's important for me to have a creative outlet of some sort. It keeps me sane.

What was your first tattoo and how do you feel about it now?

My first tattoo was three hibiscus flowers on my right hip bone. The colour is almost completely faded away now, but I still love it. I've blasted over a few of my older, faded tattoos with better work over the years, but I'll never go over those flowers. Looking at them brings back such good memories.

Was there any defining moment where you decided to plunge into getting heavily tattooed?

Not an exact moment, but I think once I found my purpose in life career wise I knew I was more than ready to start getting more skin covered. I knew very early on that I wanted damn near my whole body covered, so then it just became about reaching that goal.

What is the tattoo location that hurt the most?

This is the question I get asked most often! It's always hard for me to choose, but I do have an unfinished octopus tattoo on my ribcage that I've put off finishing for years because I hated every second of it.

Any plans to get more ink?

It's been almost a year since the last time I got tattooed and I'm definitely feeling the itch. I plan to work on my shins next.

Any upcoming work projects we should know about?

I've got a shoot coming up where I'll be getting my whole body airbrushed – completely covering all my tattoos. I'm excited about that! I try to collaborate with different photographers, and work with different styles, as often as I can.

Tell us one final random fact about yourself that we need to know.

I'm currently enrolled in school to become a mortician.

How do we get in touch?

My Instagram links are:
@msjuliahart
@juliahartmakeup





- 1 19th century print
- 2 early tattoo machines
- 3 wooden religious tattoo stamps
- 4 early 20th century tattoo needles
- 5 19th century neapolitan print
- 6 late 19th / early 20th century criminology drawing (cesare lombroso)
- 7 camorra books and illustrations of prostitutes

Stigmata: Tattoo Tradition in Italy

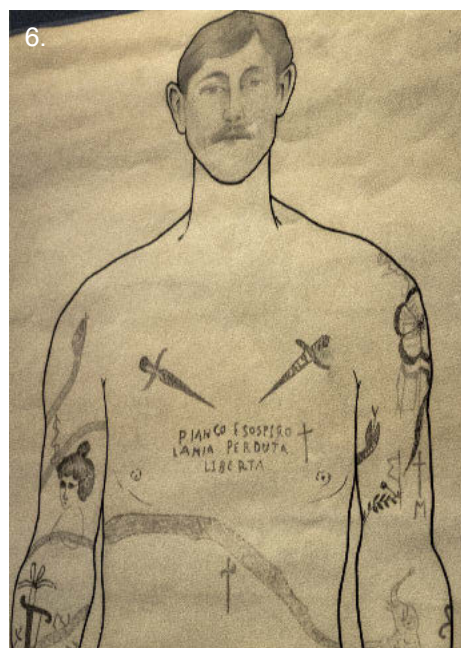
at the Museo Civico Medievale, Bologna

words and picture by Doralba Picerno



It's always with great pleasure that I return to Bologna, one of Europe's most vibrant cities – famous foodie destination and home of trailblazers and cultural icons such as radio pioneer Guglielmo Marconi, actor and singer-songwriter Lucio Dalla, and enigmatic street artist Blu. In fact its street art is as exciting as its history and the two go alongside each other with ease. Bologna is famous for its covered walkways, whose ornate pavements and long arched galleries take the visitor through the heart of the city.

The biggest surprise for me at this year's 9th Tattoo Expo Bologna was the announcement of Stigmata, a tattoo-inspired exhibition which for the first time reveals the hidden history of the Italian tattoo scene. I don't use the word "hidden" casually: a lot of the artefacts on show have been locked away in a Rome archive for over a hundred years, and it has been only through the passion and dedication of the people behind it – Gian Maurizio Fercioni (an Italian tattoo pioneer and historian who has supplied many of the pieces on show), Jurate Piacenti (who looks after the Bologna expo) and Luisa Gnechi Ruscone (a renowned tattoo anthropologist) – that these pieces were been allowed to see the light of day.

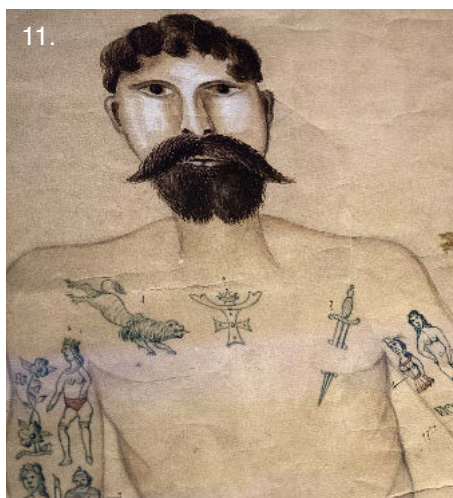




The displays were arranged in themes: religious tattoos, criminal underworld tattoos, and artisans' marks of affiliation. Amongst the most interesting objects were drawings originally commissioned by celebrated criminologist Cesare Lombroso, dating back to the end of the nineteenth century, displaying life-size portraits of criminals and their skin decorations. A cabinet contained a preserved skin tattooed with Japanese motifs (looking like brownish parchment rather than skin, but no less extraordinary for that). There were original pieces documenting the history of the Camorra criminal organisation and its tattooed symbols. Early tattoo machines were on show alongside rudimentary tattoo flash, and there was also an exhibit of the stamps used to mark people with their chosen saint in a gesture of religious devotion.



In a way, this felt like a tantalising appetiser for what could be a much bigger show. It awakened everyone's curiosity, leaving them wanting more – whether or not they previously had an interest in tattoo anthropology or the more arcane aspects of tattoo history. It was a small but perfectly formed show, with a wealth of information was on hand. With so many similar pieces still in vaults or unable to be moved because of their fragility or prohibitive insurance costs, this was a wonderful and rare opportunity to get close to some unique artefacts and understand a little more about the origins of modern tattooing. A show like this is enormously significant and hopefully indicative of shifting attitudes: to be allowed to occupy a space in the fêted and prestigious Museo Civico Medievale and reach a non-tattoo audience in the historical heart of the city is certainly a coup which might open the doors to bigger and more comprehensive exhibitions in the future.



- 8. religious tattoo motifs
- 9. tattooed skin
- 10. tattoo etching
- 11. late 19th / early 20th century criminology drawing (cesare lombroso)
- 12. religious tattoos and tattoo stamps
- 13. camorra-related pieces

12.



13.

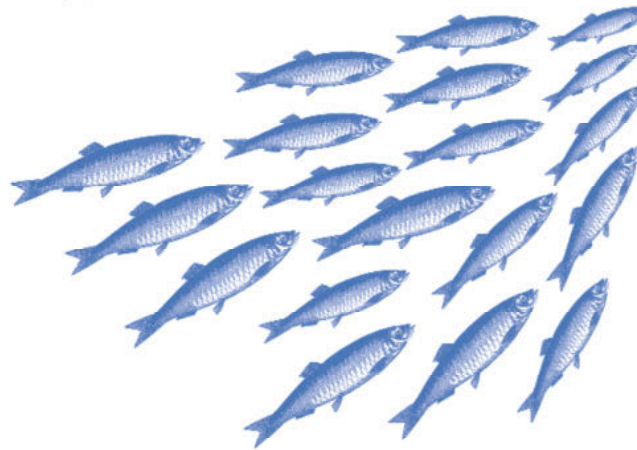



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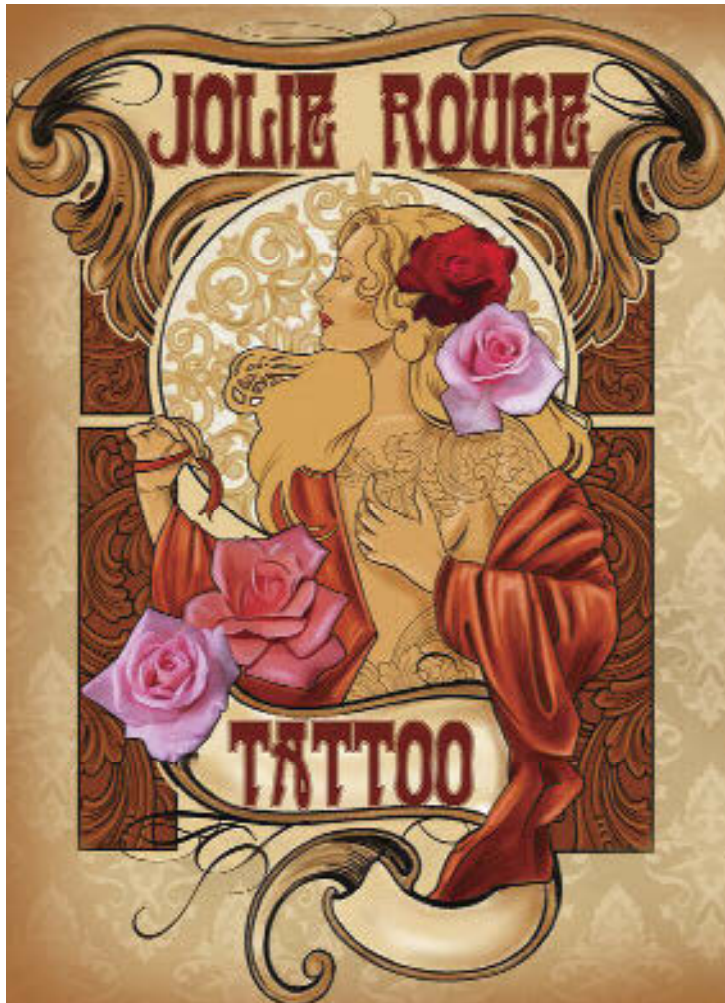



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Artists

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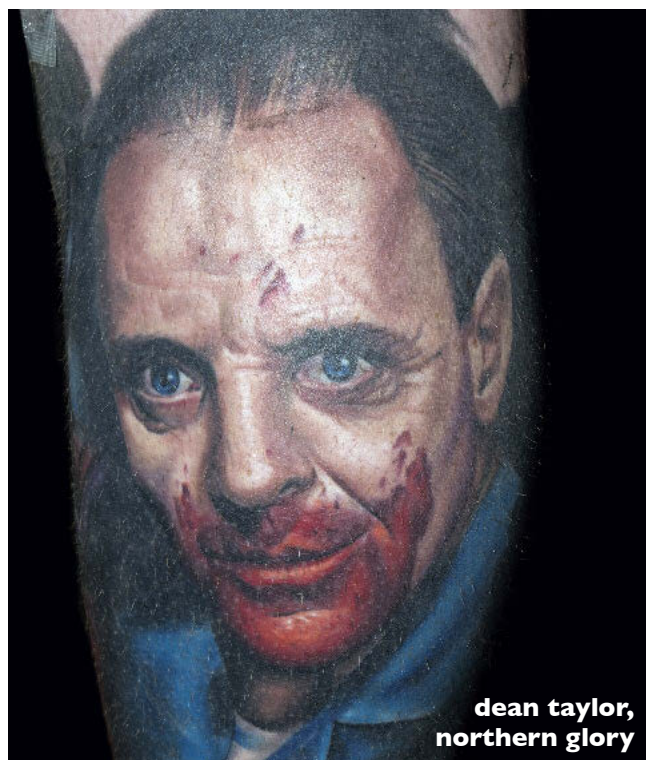
Lord Montana-Blue - Keely Rutherford

Mark Ford Maharanii

GALLERY



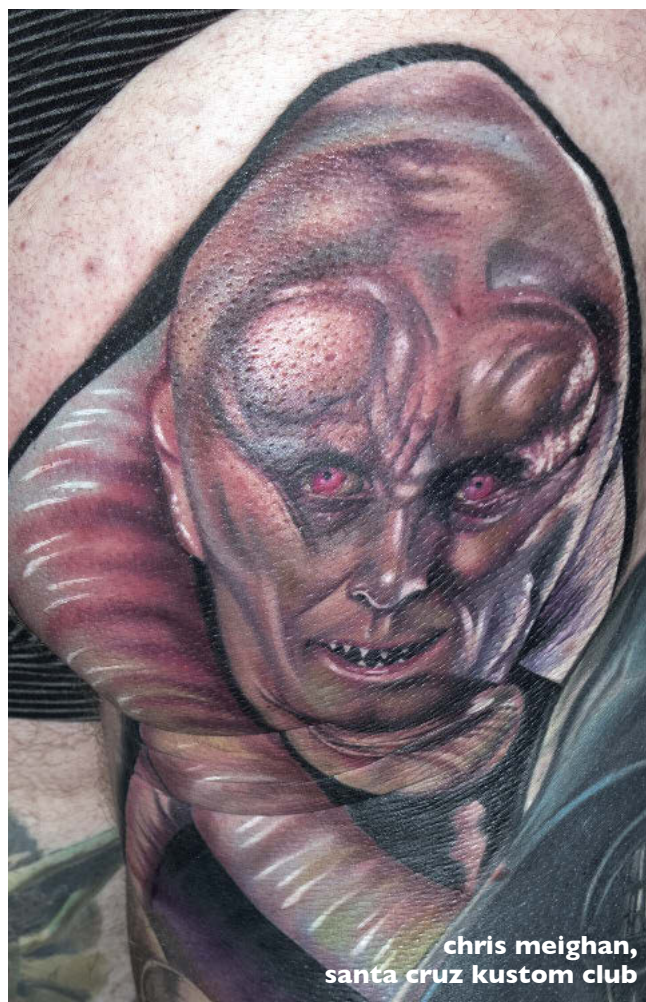
hannah westcott, the church



**dean taylor,
northern glory**



**luke bond,
phill bonds tattoo studio**



**chris meighan,
santa cruz kustom club**

santa perpetua, black sails tattoo



danielle merricks, inkden



alan proctor, twit twoo tattoo

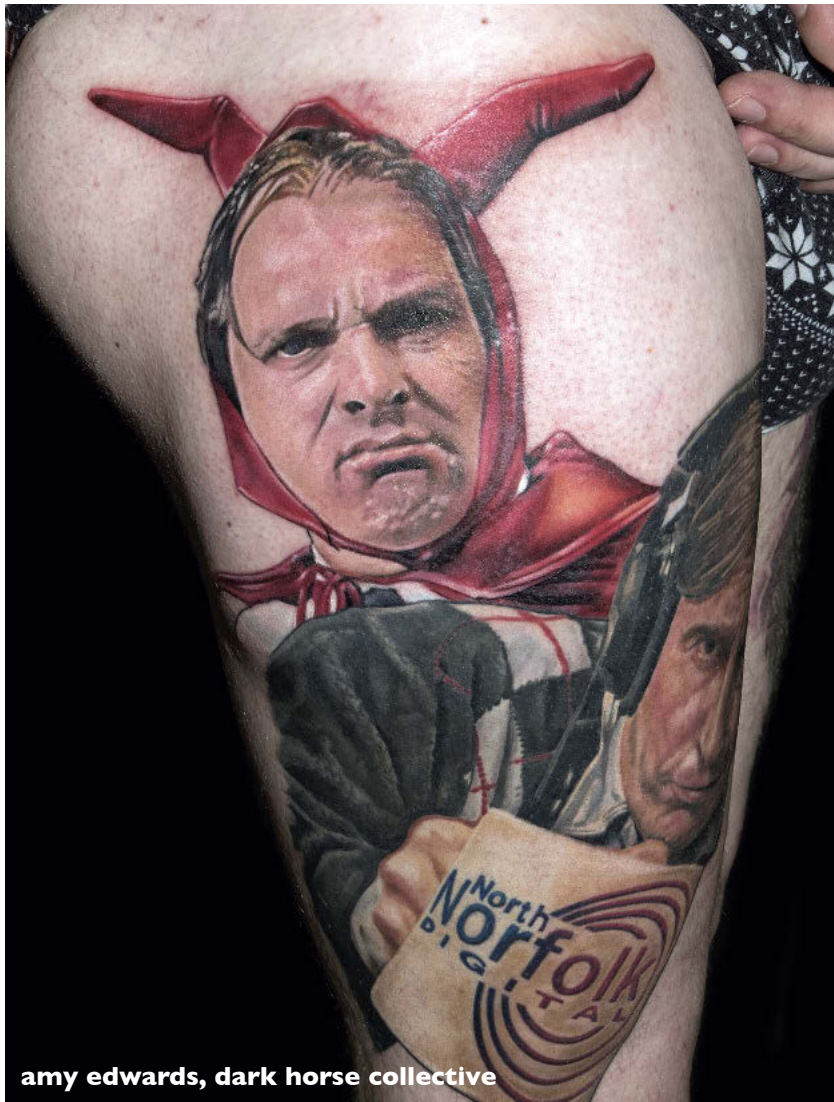


ryan evans, kamil tattoos

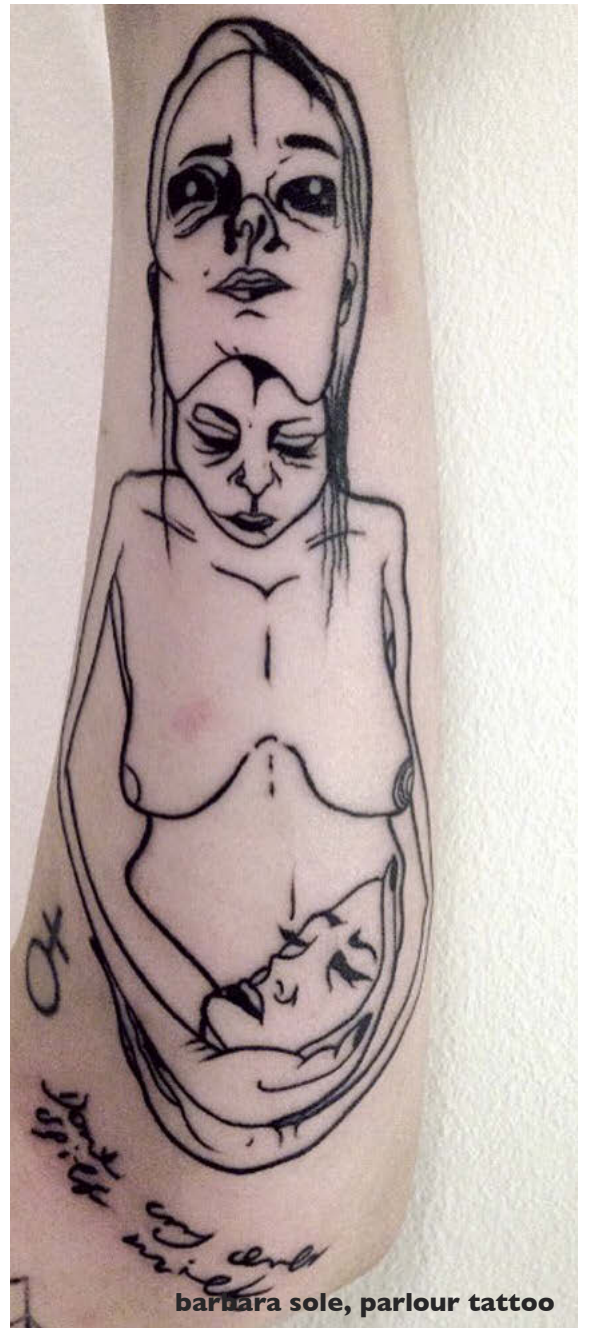


steven mostyn, memories & mischief custom tattoo (germany)





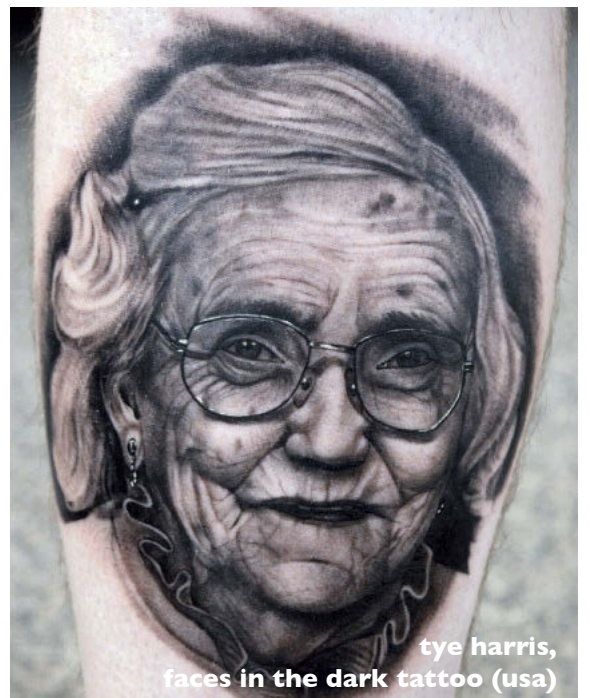
amy edwards, dark horse collective



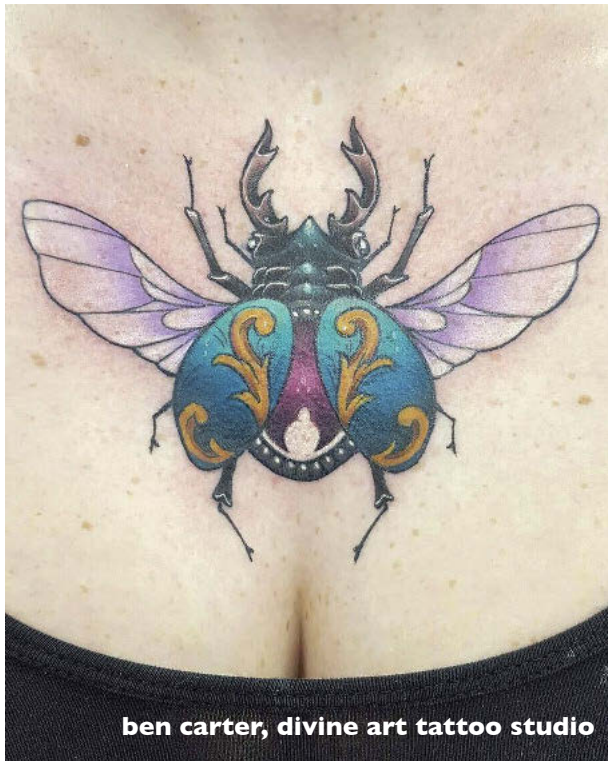
barbara sole, parlour tattoo



hoshmoo,
inksmiths of london



tye harris,
faces in the dark tattoo (usa)



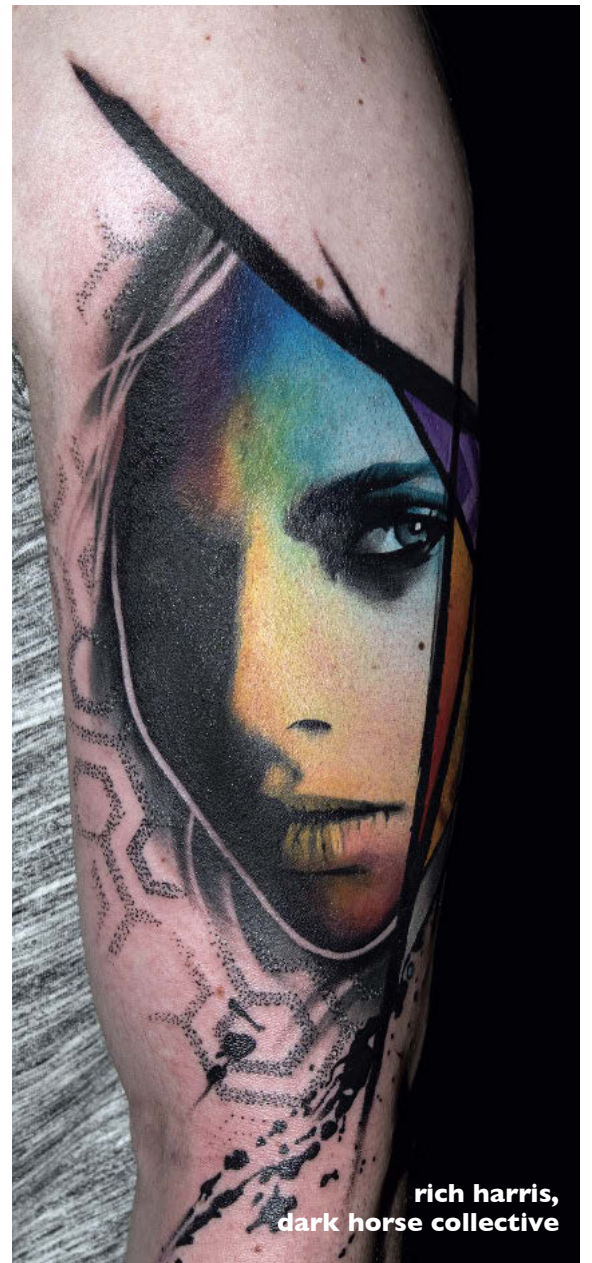
ben carter, divine art tattoo studio



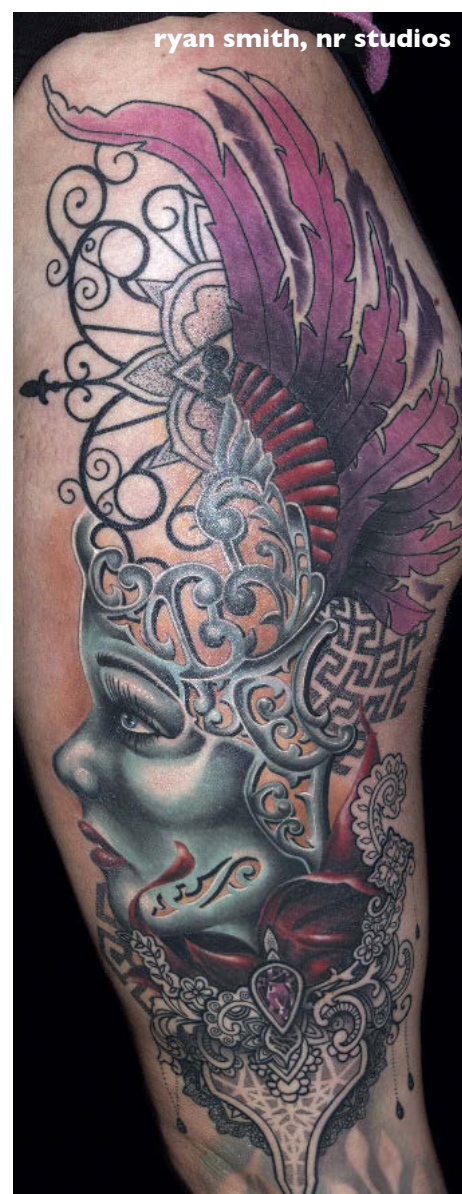
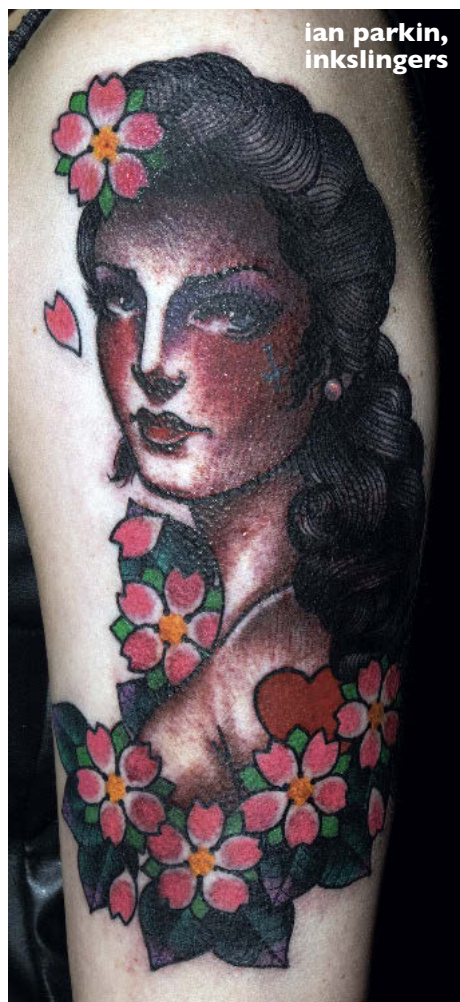
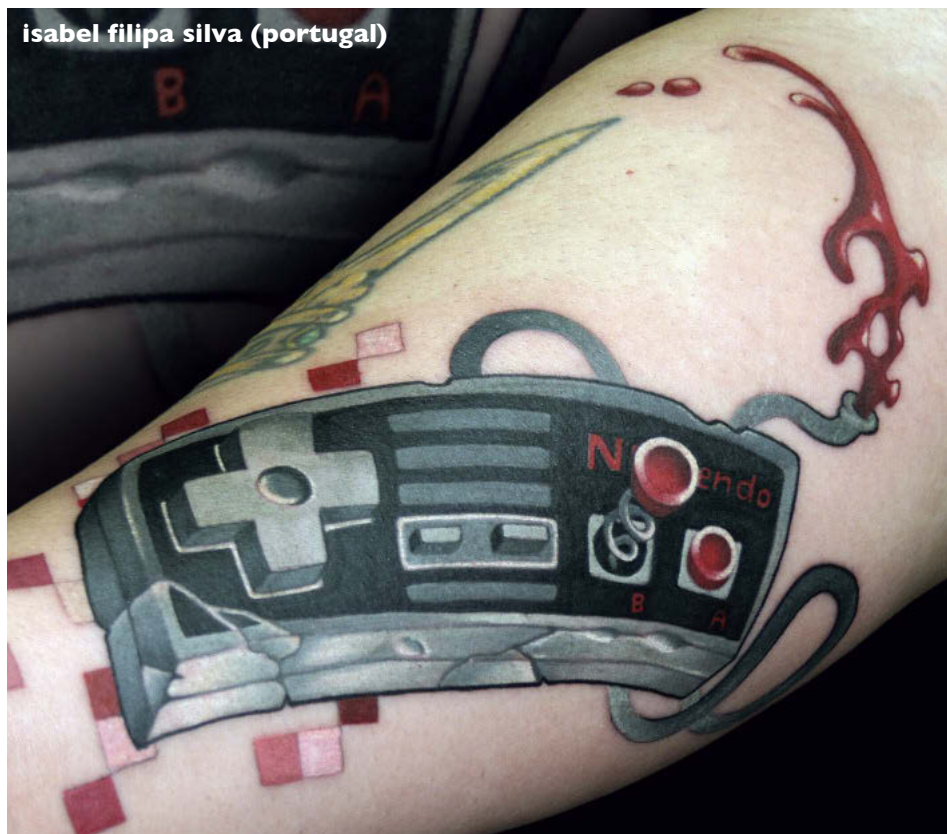
attila somogyi, nemesis

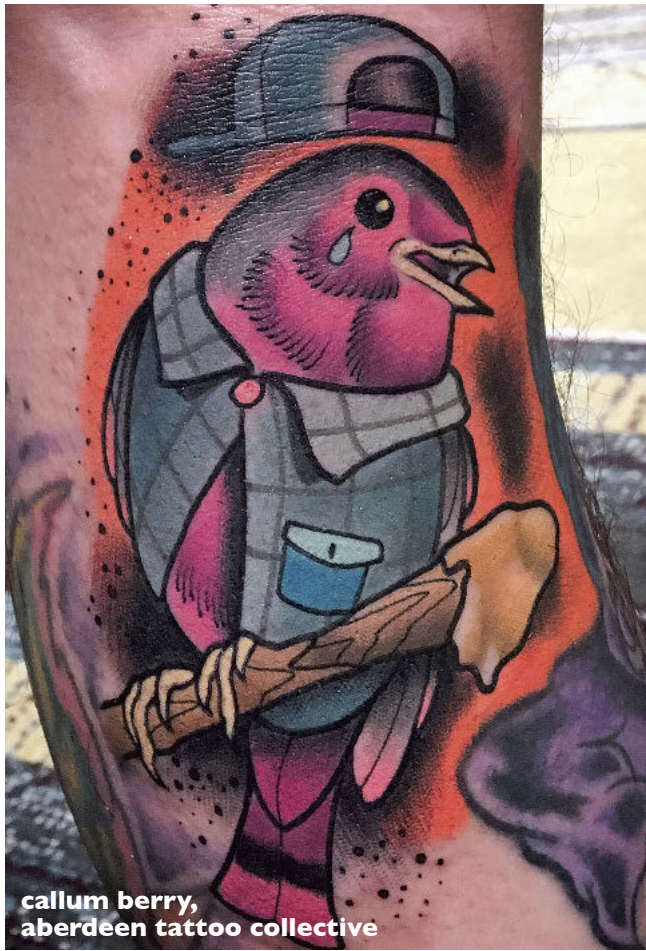


neil dransfield, private studio

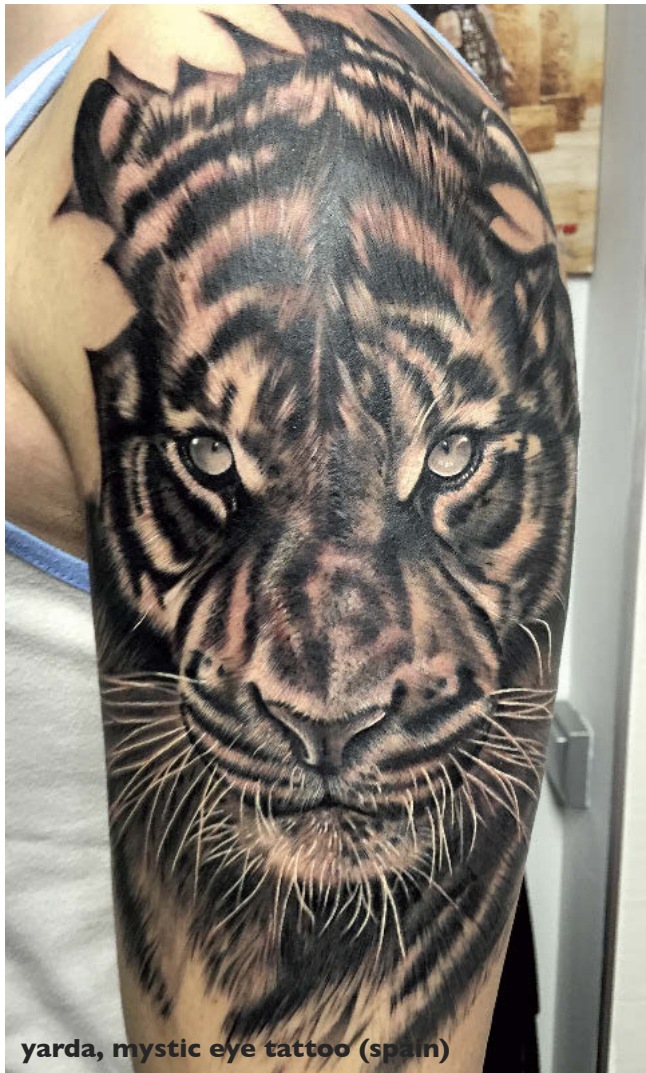


rich harris,
dark horse collective





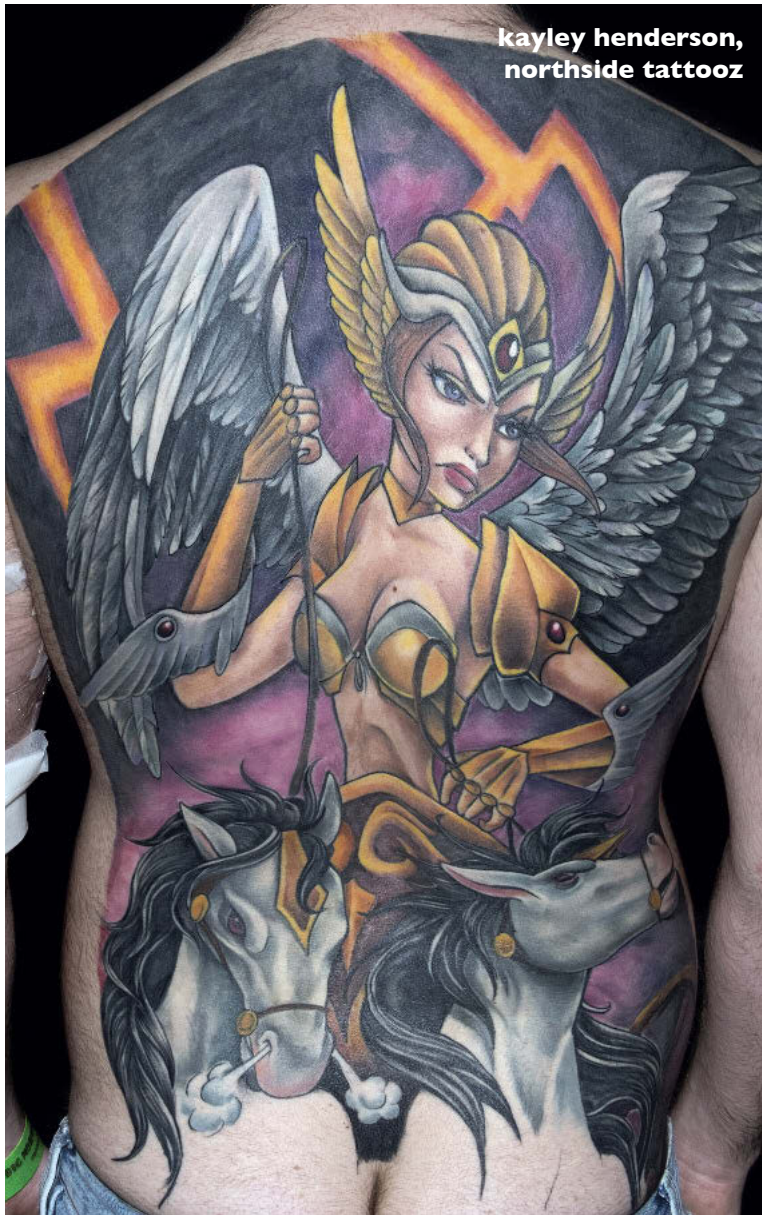
callum berry,
aberdeen tattoo collective



yarda, mystic eye tattoo (spain)



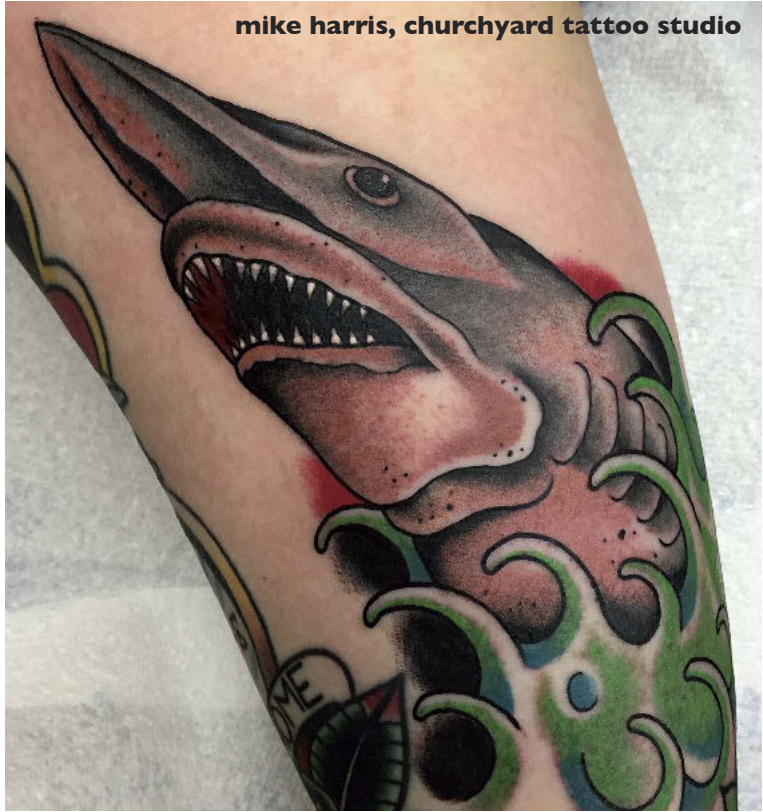
jay freestyle & ryan smith collaboration



**kayley henderson,
northside tattooz**



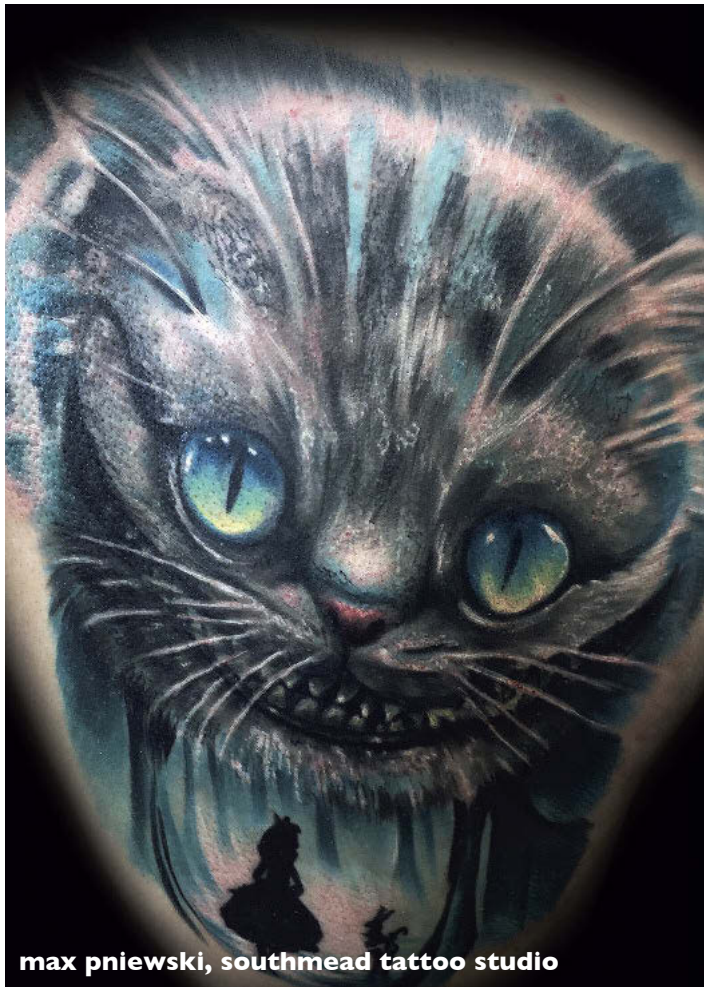
woody, eightfold tattoo



mike harris, churchyard tattoo studio



simon thomas, equinox tattoo collective



max pniewski, southmead tattoo studio

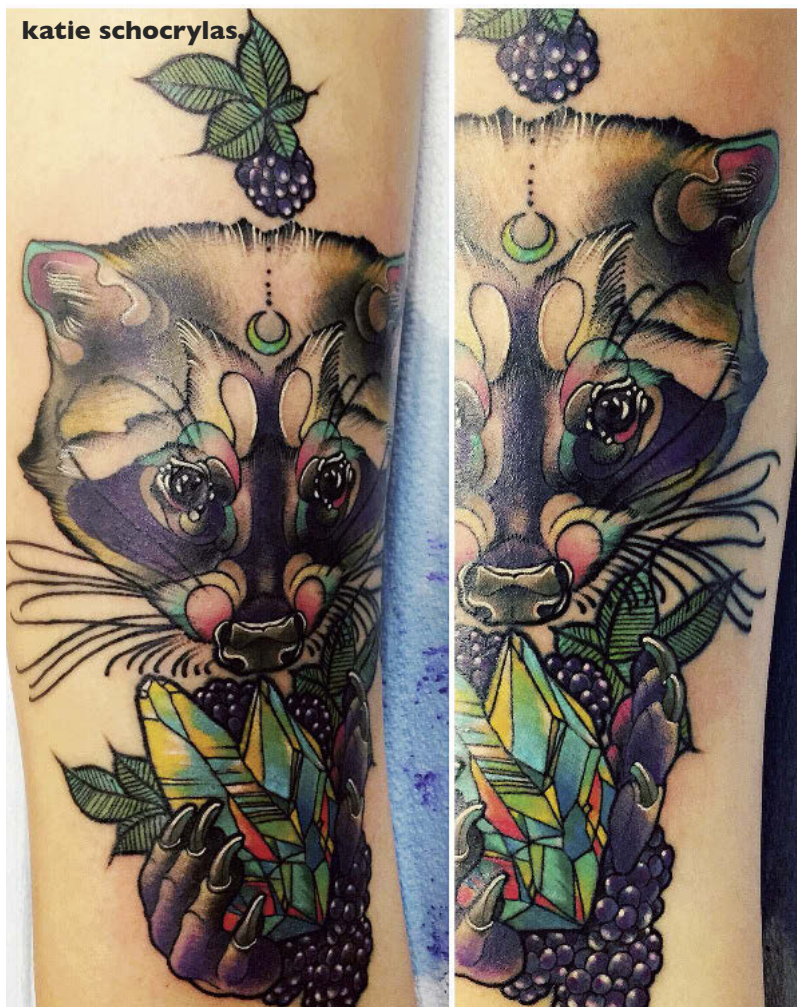


gari henderson, northside tattooz

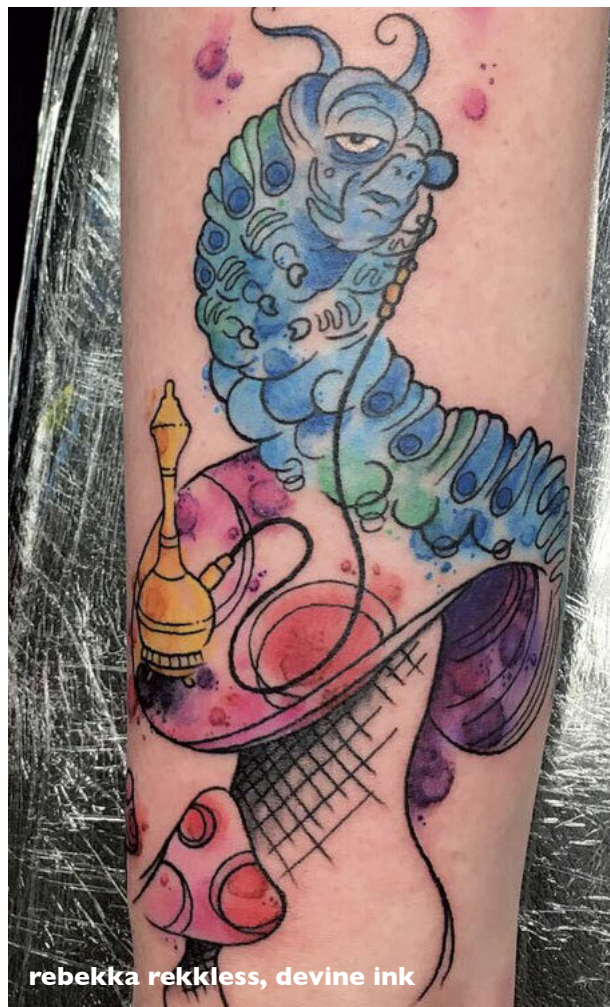


dave healer, artium ink

katie schocrylas



rebekka rekkless, devine ink

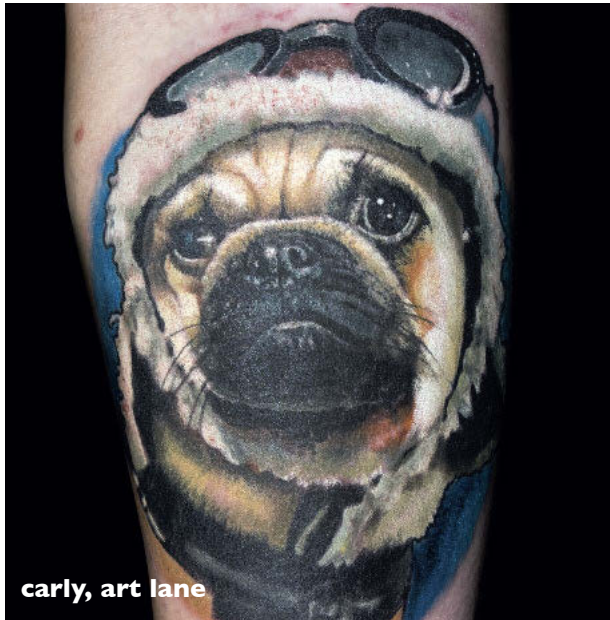


ching, orient ching (taiwan)

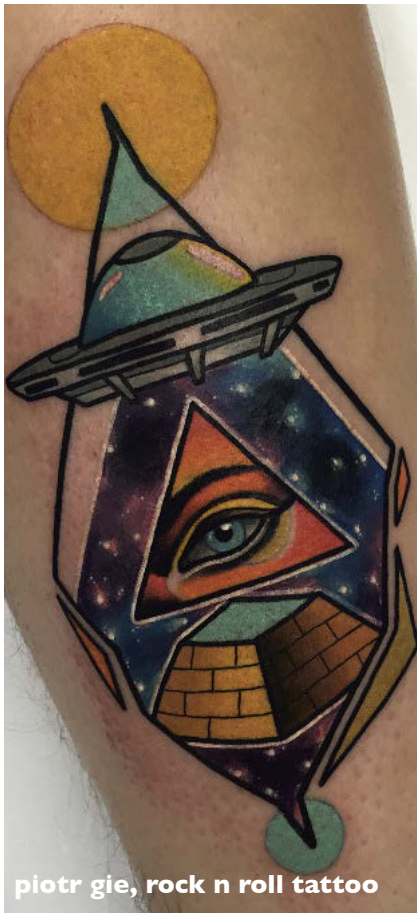




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bold as brass tattoo company



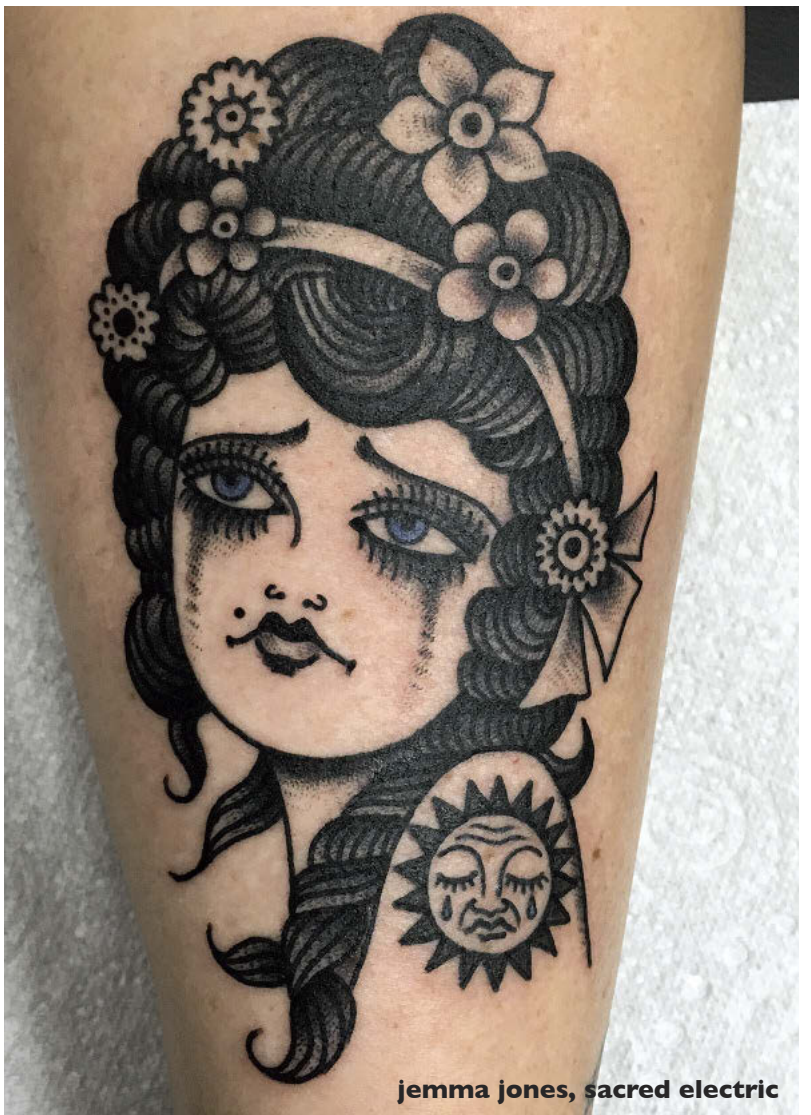
carly, art lane



piotr gie, rock n roll tattoo



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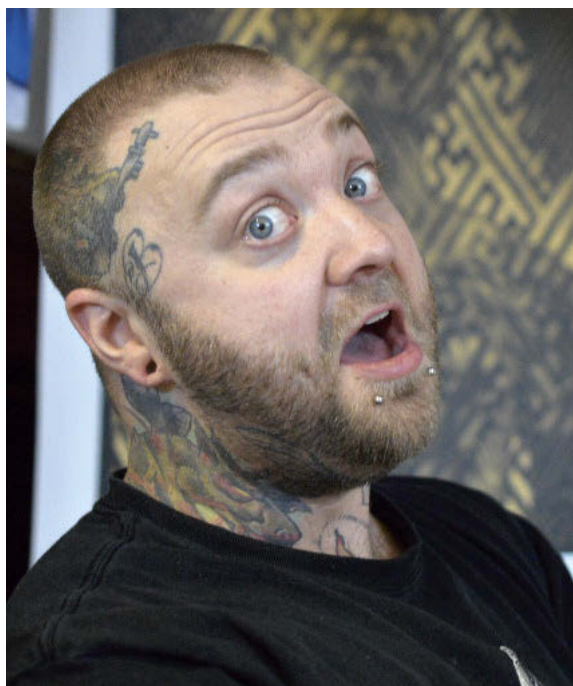
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James Bull

Interview by Lizzy
Pictures supplied by James Bull



James Bull is a Japanese specialist based at O'Happy Dagger in Amersham (on the outskirts of London). He lives with his girlfriend Hannah, and his drawings often get eaten by their two rabbits Ginger and Missy. We talked about tattoo apprenticeships, Japanese imagery, large-scale work versus small-scale work, and much else besides.

How long have you been tattooing?

"I've been in studios for roughly ten years now. However, only five of those were tattooing and the rest was piercing and being the 'shop bitch'!"

What are your earliest tattoo memories?

"I remember one of my Dad's friends coming round to our house when I was about seven years old. He was plastered in tattoos, and I was mesmerised by him. Shortly after that, I declared to my Mum that when I was older I wanted to be in a rock band, have long hair and be covered in tattoos. She was not impressed at all. But in my early 20s I was living the dream. I was in a band, and I had three tattoos on my forearms. But my Mum still didn't know about them. Then one day she DID see them and suddenly all those summer days sweating my balls off in jumpers were in vain. She flipped out!"

What inspired you to become a tattooist?

"I began to realise there was real integrity and artistry within tattooing, and I started to buy tattoo magazines to widen my understanding. I was hugely influenced by artists such as Jo Harrison and her peers. The work they were putting out was a far cry from the 'bloke down the road', who had regrettably done most of my work up until this point. It was around this time that my mate Dan Morris (Rain City) had started tattooing and was tattooing me. He was a huge influence in making me want to pick up a machine and tattoo."

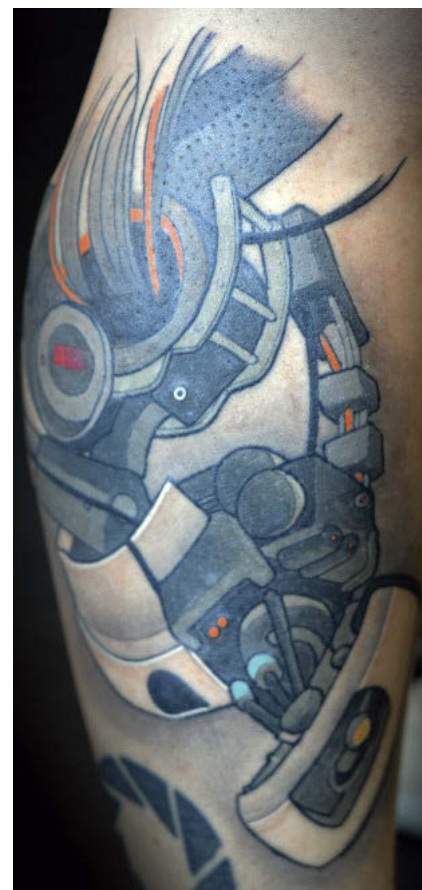
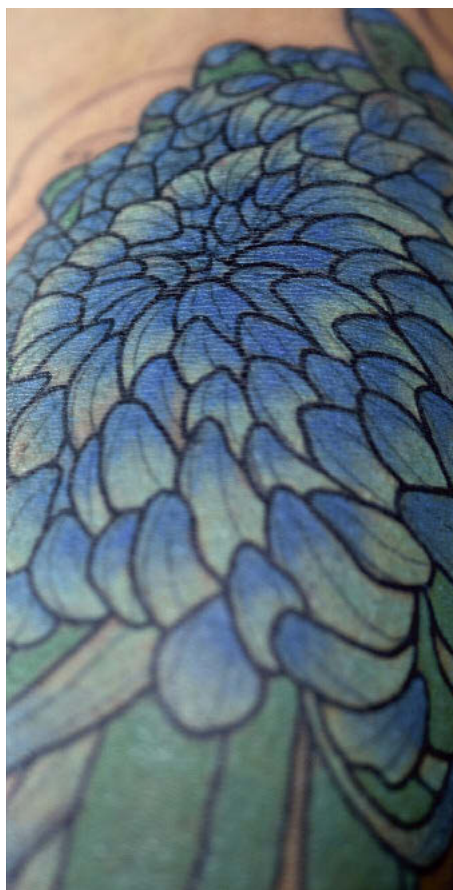
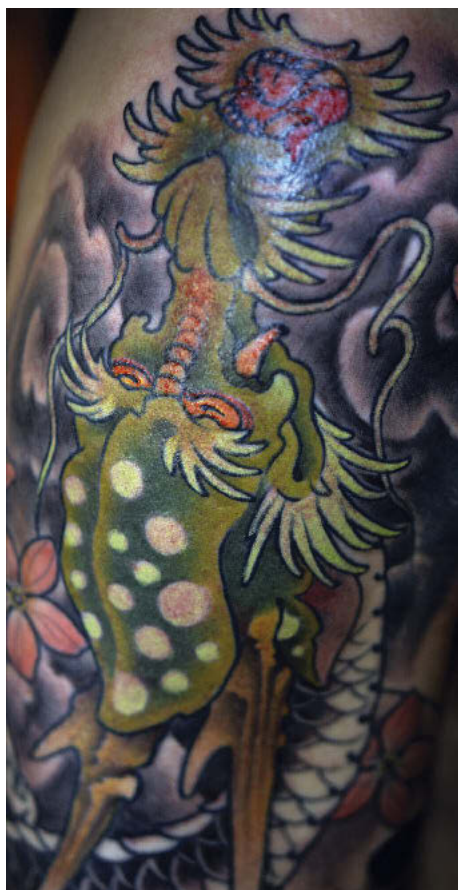
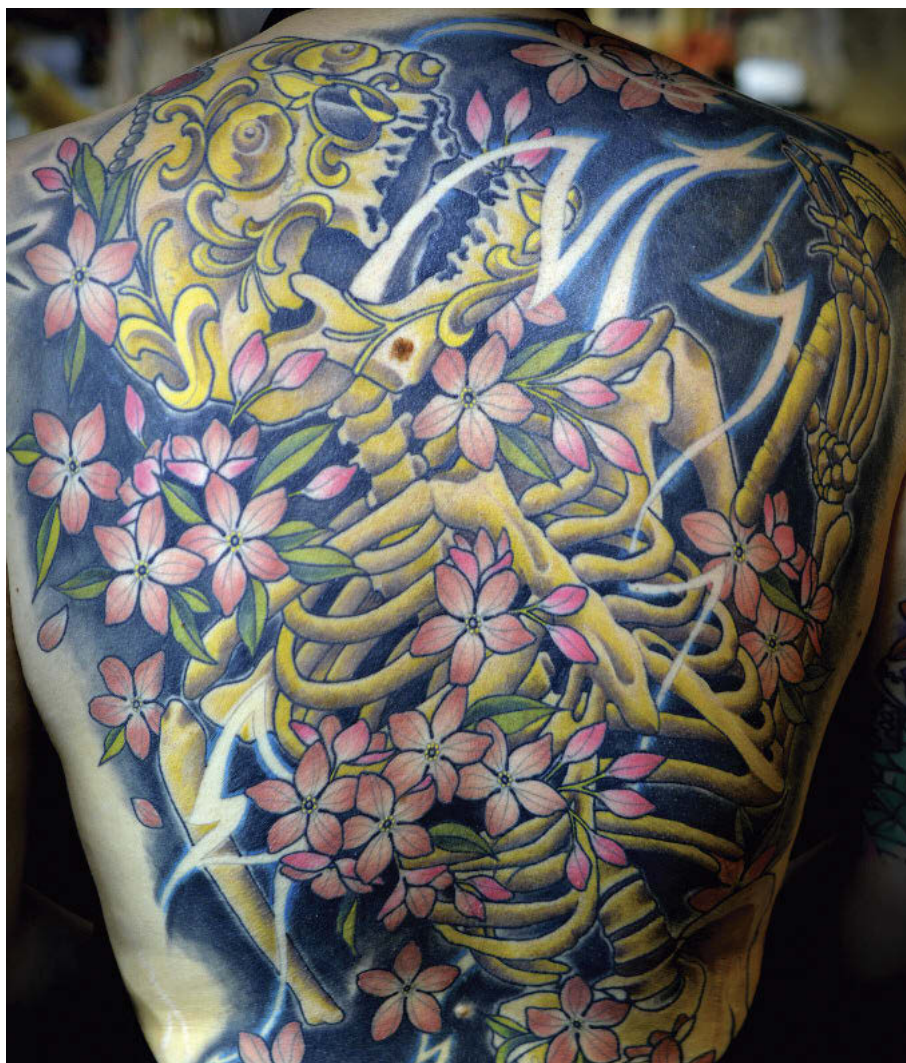
How did you learn to tattoo?



Apprenticeships were few and far between in those days. I managed to get one, but I had to move fifty miles away. However, it was an 'old school' apprenticeship consisting of the usual tasks - cleaning, scrubbing, drawing and tracing designs, reception work, running countless and bizarre errands and a whole host of other crazy crap just to prove that I wanted to learn. And learn I did not! I was also piercing at the time, so that I could make money while 'proving my worth', but after four years and no change to my situation, I'd had enough. I had friends who were tattooing in a studio in High Wycombe that was advertising for another tattooist. I figured that after spending six months sleeping on the studio floor (as I wasn't earning enough money to support myself), what did I have to lose by moving studios? Taking that job was when I really started to learn to tattoo. I worked alongside some talented artists, and I felt very lucky being able to observe them and pick up their techniques. I was then able to teach myself and improve my practise."

Do you have any regrets about the route you took into tattooing?

"Being largely self-taught gave me a sense of achievement and a confidence boost that I might not have got from an apprenticeship. But having said that, I do wish I'd had a fulfilling apprenticeship, as I would have progressed much more quickly to the level where I am now. Having a wealth of knowledge bestowed on you is not only bloody useful, but also a great honour."





How has your style changed since you began tattooing?

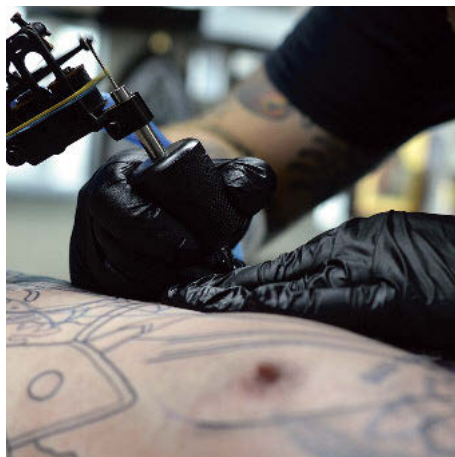
"My style has changed dramatically. When I first started working at studios I fell into a traditional style, as there was nobody else specialising in it. I was also drawn to artists such as Uncle Allan and Eckel, whose work blew my mind because it was the first time I'd ever really seen traditional new school principles blended with other artistic disciplines. It was their inspiration, as well as the tattoos worn by the skaters and bands I was into, that forced my work into a much more new school direction. Then it wasn't long before I realised my passion was for Japanese tattooing and artwork - but working in that earlier bold style has definitely influenced my take on traditional Japanese."

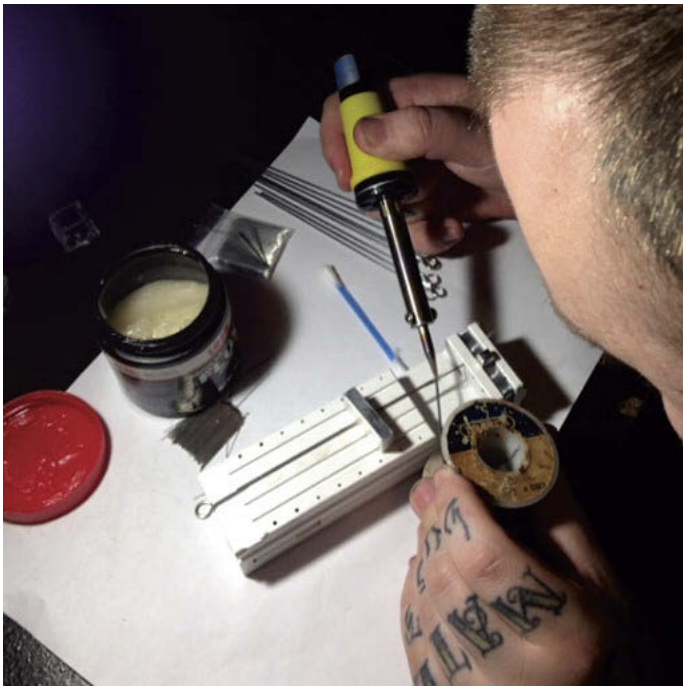
Where did your love of Japanese art come from?

"Although it seems like a fairly recent interest, I believe it may have been a passion of mine further back than I realise. Growing up, I always loved watching martial arts films. How could a culture so far removed from what I knew be anything but exciting?"

Do you try to keep to the 'rules' of Japanese imagery?

"Keeping to the traditional rules of Japanese tattooing is very important to me. At first I was just drawn to the aesthetics of the Japanese style, but having studied the meanings behind the symbols, I grew to understand the importance of the traditions. I have an ever increasing collection of books, and I also like to watch documentaries and attend seminars (such as those run by Gomineko Books) on Japanese mythology and and *Yokai* [supernatural monsters]. I'm always excited to tell customers the story behind the imagery, and explain how the design will be built, and why certain flowers shouldn't go with certain creatures, for instance. The aim for most tattooists is firstly to have a large regular customer base and then the opportunity to push themselves as artists. For me, the thought of my work being seen, and standing up to scrutiny, by such masters such as Horiyoshi III and Shige is mind-blowing. This thought was what first kicked my arse into gear when it came to educating myself about the rules and traditions of Japanese tattoo art. To gain the respect of other artists is a huge aspiration for me."



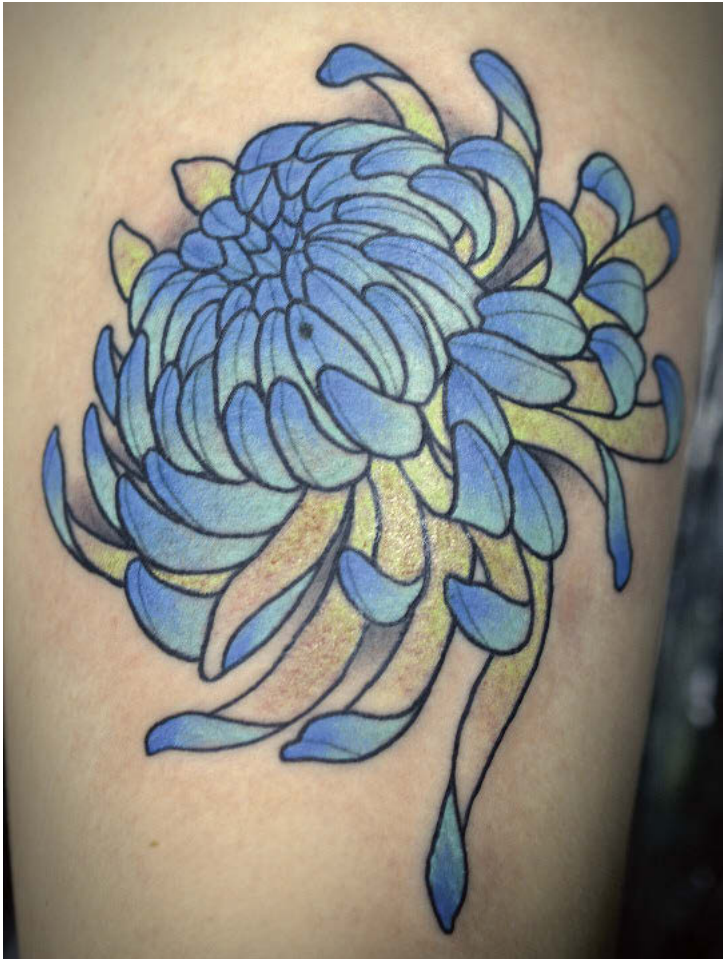


What is it that makes your particular execution of this style so unique?

“This is a tough question to answer! I believe it's important to put your own style to a piece of artwork, but not to deviate from the fundamentals too much either. Some imagery can become so manipulated for the sake of originality that it loses its identity and significance. I find that looking at the work of artist I admire helps me to build my confidence and therefore 'own' how I draw a design. ...See how I avoided the question? It's so difficult to speak about your own work when you are a massively self-critical person!”

One thing that I find really striking about your work is that you really pack your colour in. Do you have any particular techniques that you use?

“I'm fortunate in that I don't usually do a second pass on colour. The nature of large-scale work over multiple sessions does allow for a quick 'touch-up' here and there, but nothing major. It's obviously important to me that my customer feels as comfortable as possible, but the main objective is to produce a flawless tattoo, whether it is hurting them or not! Tattoos hurt, but executed well they last a lifetime and they also carry the artist's name on them too. I'm in awe of artists such as Jeff Gogue and Tom Strom, who are very illustrative, so I can only assume that the bold colour packing in my work stems from my beginnings in the new school style.”

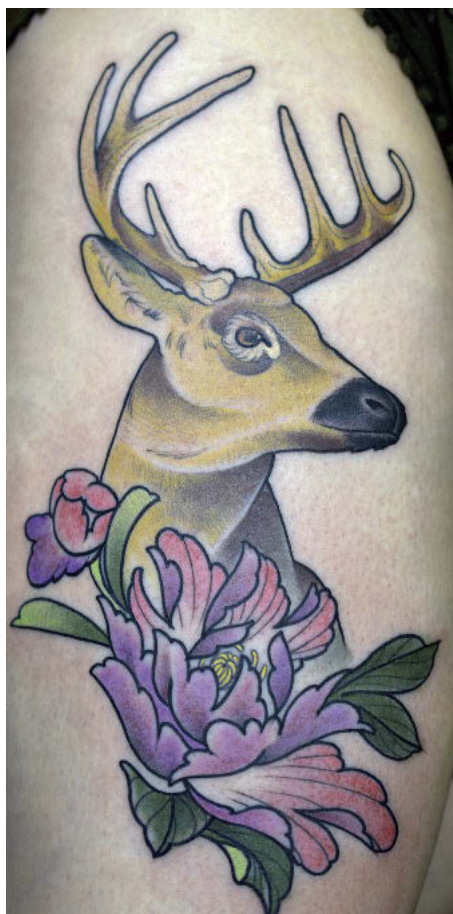


Do you use coil machines, rotaries, or a combination?

"I've recently started using rotary tattoo machines. I was always very resistant to them and I preferred coils. I like it that the parts are replaceable on a coil machine, and I like the skill involved in tuning them - and also the fact that I can colour pack with them or produce a subtle grey shade just as easily. However, I have found that the client's skin heals quicker with rotaries. I see a lot of apprentices who only use rotaries, having never even picked up a coil machine, but it's important to me to understand the tools I use. I've also been practicing needle-making. Using pre-soldered and sterile needles is incredibly efficient, but I believe it's important to learn the process. I don't do it for every tattoo, but you never know - there might come a time when pre-made equipment isn't available and making your own is the only option!"

You work on both large- and small-scale tattoos. Do you have a preference?

"I enjoy both. They each bring their own challenges and rewards. Smaller pieces are fun, as the customer leaves the studio, happy, with a tattoo completed on the same day; you can get a photo at the end of the session to use in a portfolio; and the session itself is less intensive for the customer. But small tattoos can also be tricky sometimes as customers tend to have a long list of design requirements, and whilst drawing the design I'll think 'Ah man, this would be amazing as a full leg or body suit!' Large-scale tattooing tends to attract customers who have done their research, who like your style and appreciate your professional guidance. This level of trust is amazing, it makes the designing process so much more fulfilling and ultimately the tattoo a work of art to be proud of."



Tell us about your drawing process.

"I'm not a fan of using an iPad to draw; I'm a traditional, pencil and paper kind of guy. So large scale Japanese pieces can be pretty labour intensive (especially with cheeky rabbits on the loose, trying to eat the drawing). But I wouldn't have it any other way. For myself and many tattoo artists, drawing the design is just as important as executing the tattoo. It's not about tracing images from the internet; it's about researching the story behind the imagery, finding reference pictures and drawing the design from scratch. I offer consultations for large scale work, because it's fantastic to discuss ideas in person. You can't get a good feel of who the customer is via email or Facebook. I enjoy being able to talk to them so that I can better understand their motivations for getting tattooed and suggest imagery that would suit them. Japanese tattooing has such an abundance of imagery to signify all manner of life events. The birth of a new child, for example, is well represented by Fu dogs as they're fantastic parents, guardians and protectors. It can be a challenge drawing the same imagery multiple times and still being satisfied with the outcome, and making it unique for that customer, but I find this is a great opportunity to push myself and try new ideas."

Do you feel you're working in a very competitive market?

"In the last five to ten years tattooing has exploded into the mainstream, with high street chains using tattooed models and so many celebrities with visible tattoos. It seems the number of tattoo studios may have reached



saturation point - and I've certainly found the number of customers has declined. These days, if you're located outside of central London and you don't have 24k followers on social media it seems to influence some people's opinion of your work. But thankfully those customers who are serious about seeking out custom work by artists who are passionate about their craft are willing to do some research to find a tattoo artist - and willing to travel too. So I feel very blessed for that."





Would you ever consider publishing something like 'sketch book' for other artists to use?

"I did begin putting together a bunch of sketches for a book, but being such a self-critical person I didn't get more than five designs drawn before I hated them all and ended up scrawling a cock all over them in defiance! It is certainly something I would like to do in the future though, as I'm able to learn from (and control!) my self-critical nature a bit better these days. I've started to put together a brief list of popular Japanese iconography on my website for customers and other artists to use as reference. I can't recommend the Gomeniko books highly enough. Crystal's wealth of knowledge is mind-blowing. If you're interested in Japanese art, culture or tattooing you'll not be disappointed by that range of books."

Looking ahead to the future, how do you see your work developing?

"Blimey! It's so hard to anticipate how my work will develop in the future. It's changing all the time! I'm constantly trying to push myself - both style and subject wise - by not getting too comfortable. I also look at every piece I've done and ask myself how would I do it differently next time. I would love to be able to tattoo some more obscure creatures and *Yokai* in the future."



What is your advice for anyone looking to get tattooed?

"Do your homework. Find a style you like, search for a tattoo artist who specialises in that style, and if they're happy to answer your questions and share their knowledge and advice during a consultation... they're a keeper! But remember to appreciate the advice they give you, as it's ultimately to ensure you have a righteous piece of artwork on you."

Any final words of wisdom?

"If all else fails... save vegetables and eat sausage!"

James Bull

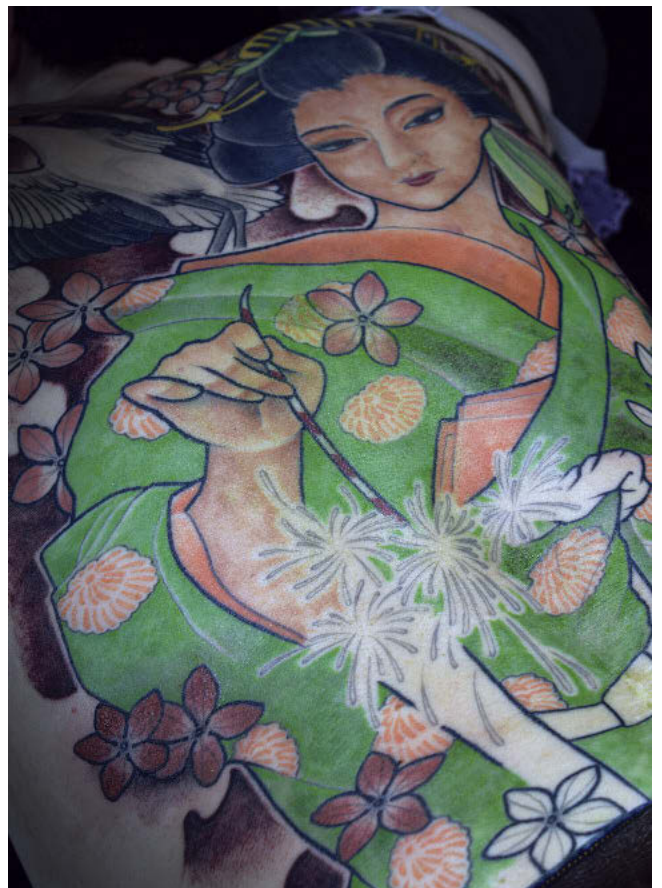
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SOUTHAMPTON TATTOO FESTIVAL

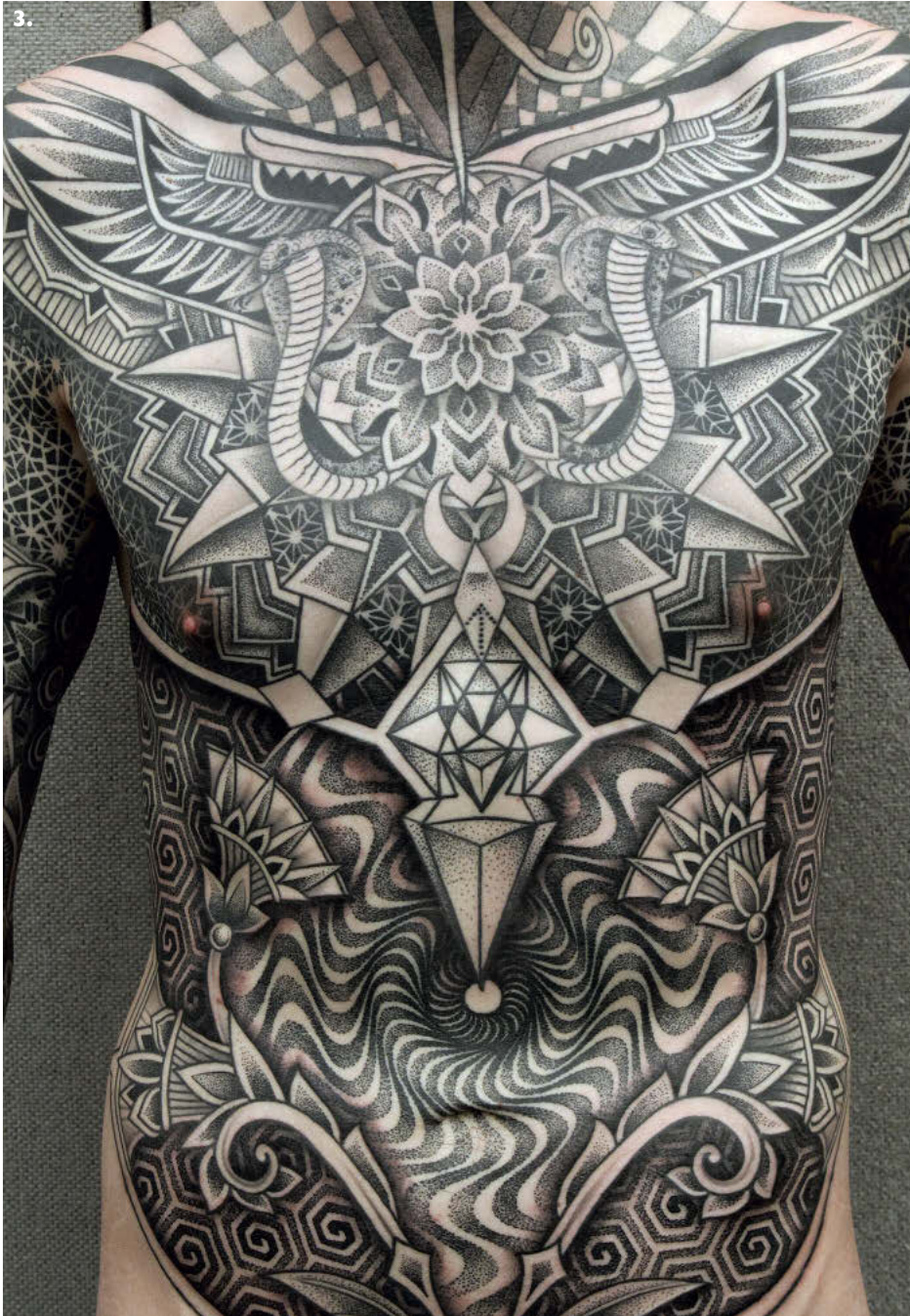
I'd heard a lot of good things about the Southampton Tattoo Festival, so it was with a high level of excitement that I headed south on a scorching hot morning at the beginning of July to sample this south coast delight. And when I arrived, the car park was already rammed, which is always a good sign...

The show is held at The Ageas Bowl, also known as The Rose Bowl, home of Hampshire Country Cricket Club. It was originally a music festival, retro/vintage fair and tattoo convention rolled into one; but now, in its third year, it seems to be marketing itself purely as tattoo event. Having said that, there were numerous stalls selling all manner of vintage items (suits and dresses as well as t-shirts and other paraphernalia) in the natural corridor space underneath the spectator stands – along with a rather splendid hot sauce stall that quickly caught both my eye and my wallet. There was also an outside stage, plus a selection of swanky hotrods and an exhibition of super slick custom motorbikes, many of which were available to buy!

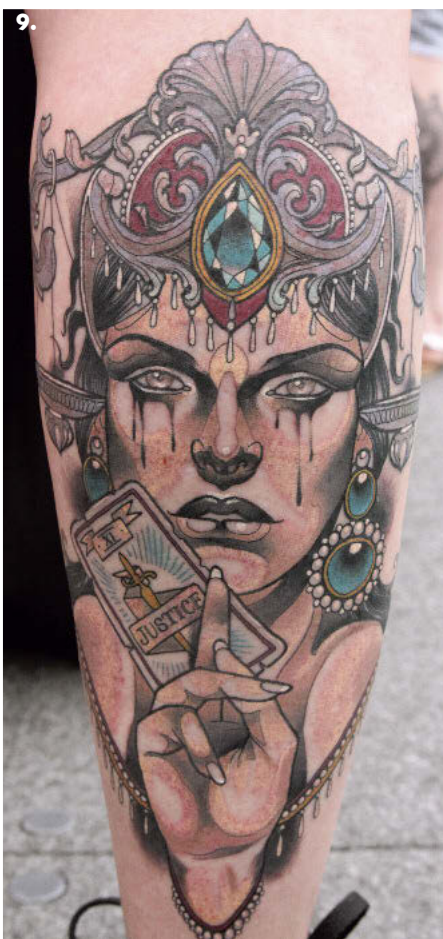
All the tattooing took place in a modern two-storey glass building opposite the stage area. Near the entrance there were about a dozen artists, plus the Global Tattoo Supplies stand. In a large room with a glass wall overlooking the cricket ground, large numbers of Star Wars robots was waiting to greet you, along with movie-inspired artefacts to buy and even a guest appearance from a rather short man who I was told played R2-D2 in the original Star Wars movie... But where were the other artists? I was beginning to be a bit concerned about the lack of tattooing until someone directed me upstairs to a huge room, flooded with natural light, where I found them – eighty working tattooists, spread along eight rows that led to a low stage area used for entertainment and of course the tattoo competitions.

Many of the artists working the show were local to the south coast of England and it was interesting to see such a large amount of decent work being done by tattooists who are not found on the more general convention circuit. The well known studios were there – like Art 'N' Soul, Rock 'N' Roll, Inkination and Alex Hennerley's Adorned – plus Jessi James' new studio The Crow Quill. The list of artist and the styles on offer was suitably impressive and many are available to view on the show's website www.southamptontattoofestival.co.uk





1. monika koch, skin creations
2. alex, adorned tattoo
3. alex, adorned tattoo
4. megan holland, indelible ink
5. john bell, tainted souls
6. jacob, hypnotic art tattoo

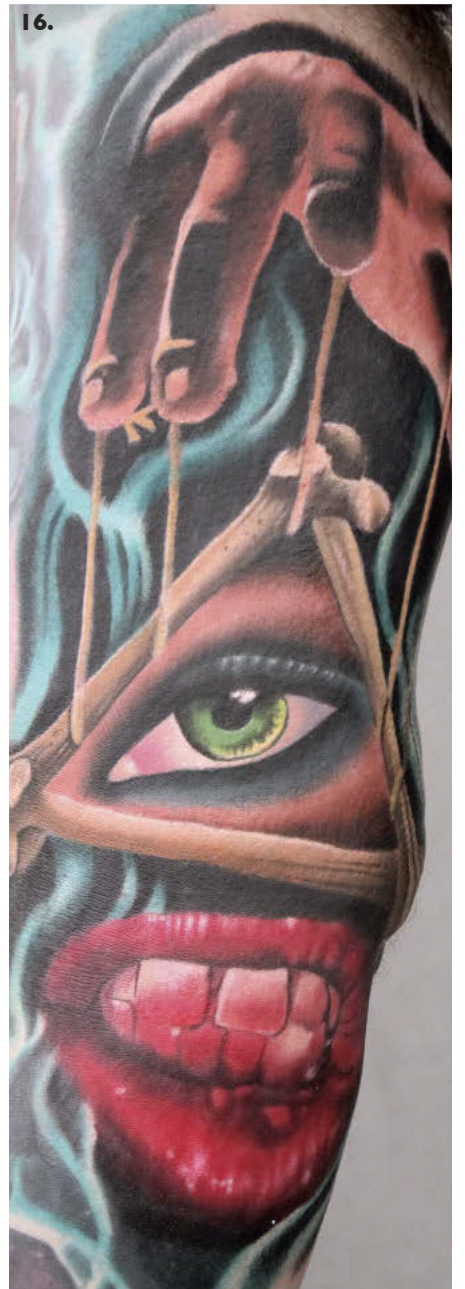
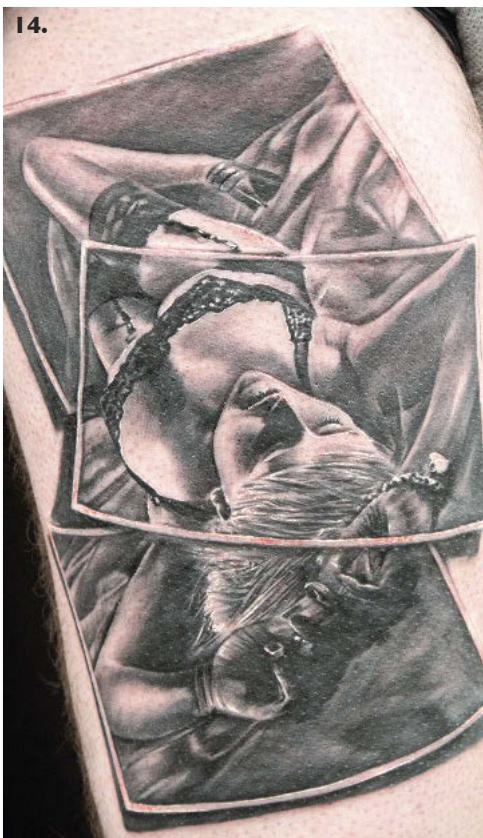


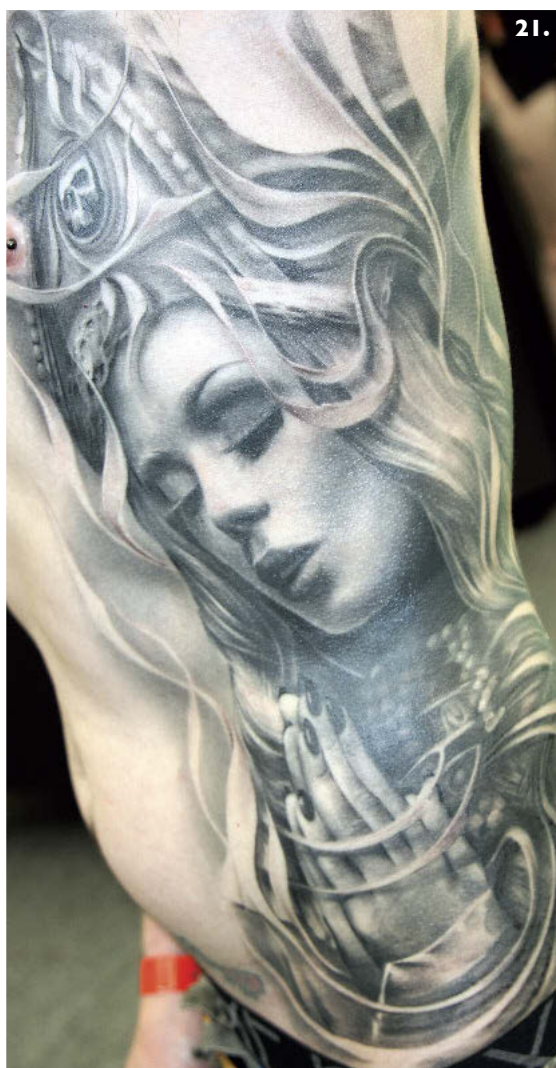
Throughout the day the crowd ebbed and flowed. Many people struggled with the heat in the big room, choosing to step outside and partake of a beverage or two. The show finished around seven, and we all dissipated to sample the delights that Southampton had to offer! Sunday started bright enough and before we knew it we were back in the hall for day two of the festival. Numbers through the door seemed healthy enough to me, although I was told things had been busier in previous years.

So I guess the big question is... would I go again? And the answer is Yes. It's great to see so much good local talent, and the grassroots are where you often find the future stars. I came away with a warm satisfied glow (which wasn't just from the hot sauce!) There was a lot going on, and the combination of ink and entertainment coupled with the opportunity to bag yourself some bargains is always going to be hard to resist on a summer weekend.



- 7. rebekka rekkless, divine art
- 8. moose, titanic tattoo
- 9. chrissy hills, inklineation
- 10. lukas kozusnik, the gallery (poland)
- 11. jay, art n soul
- 12. gazz, black rabbit tattoo collective
- 13. nathan, bennett and merritt
- 14. slav, house of art
- 15. casper, rock n roll
- 16. patrick mcfarlane, black frieghter tattoo company





17. kamil, art n soul
18. jamie, jamie kerr art
19. archie, kookie tattoo
20. marcin mikos,
pix tattoo
21. kamil, art n soul
22. jay, art n soul
23. moose, titanic tattoo



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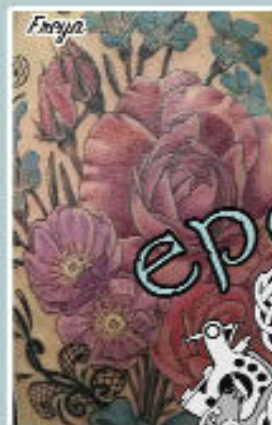


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Inkdependent

TATTOO



marcin



Having printed so many photos of their work in the magazine over the years, we thought it was time to meet the guys from Inkdependent (in Edinburgh) and get to know them a bit better. Marek started tattooing about fifteen years ago; realism is his speciality. Marcin, another realism expert, has been tattooing for around thirteen years. Wojtek spent twelve years as a piercer, and has been tattooing for two years at Inkdependent; dotwork and geometry are his thing. Chris has been tattooing at Inkdependent for one year (and two years in total); he does mainly traditional and blackwork. Daniel apprenticed at Inkdependent and has now been tattooing full-time for three years; he does blackwork and illustrative style work. Ashleigh is the current apprentice, and Kamil is the manager. All the guys are Polish – except Ashleigh and Chris (but apparently they're rapidly learning to speak the language!)

Marcin: Inkdependent started in 2009. Me and Marek were working in a different studio in Edinburgh, for about three and a half years. We decided to do our own thing and do something really good. We always wanted to have our own studio, and the time was right. We wanted to do things our way – not what other people wanted us to do. We wanted to be able to be selective with our clients and our style, not necessarily doing everything that comes in.

Total Tattoo: So more of a custom route?

Marcin: Absolutely. I think at that time lots of people would just walk down the street and go, 'Oh look there's a tattoo studio. Let's go in and buy some tattoos' – like they were shopping.

Total Tattoo: So the studio started with Marcin, Marek and Wojtek?

Marcin: It started with Marek and me, and after some time, Wojtek came.

Wojtek: But I had been working at the same studio as the other guys.

Marek: It was great to have our own studio finally.

Total Tattoo: Do you have an ethos to the studio?

Marcin: We just want to do a good job of tattooing for our customers.

Wojtek: We just want to do good art!

Total Tattoo: More and more studios are going down the artistic route now, instead of being a traditional 'street shop'.

Marcin: Yes. It was quite difficult to establish that in the beginning, especially because we are. I think it was harder because it seemed that people didn't trust us as much. So we had to find customers. But it's easier now, because people know us and they like our work.

Chris: Yeah. Social media has helped for sure.

Kamil: It's easier now with tattoo magazines, Facebook, Instagram and so on.

Marcin: And people are so much more open to the different styles of tattooing now.

Daniel: Tattooing is in a good situation now because there is something to suit everyone. A lot of our customers will come into the shop, not knowing who to get tattooed by – and after a quick chat with Kamil, he can show them the portfolio of the tattooist best suited to their taste.

danielle



wojtek



marek



chris



Total Tattoo: Do you find that you still have to 'educate' customers?

Wojtek: Years ago, you'd have to explain that you couldn't cover solid tribal with a soft black and grey portrait, but it's not like that so much now.

Marcin: We always make sure we give full consultations with the customers and ensure everything is explained fully. If it's someone's first tattoo, there may be things that they don't know. Or with cover-ups, they might not know what can be done and how we can make it better.

Total Tattoo: Has television affected the tattoo industry?

Marcin: Yes. In some ways it's been good for the industry. When people started seeing tattoos on television, they realised that there wasn't anything 'wrong' with having them, and that anyone could have art on their skin. Before, that might not have been so clear. It was something to be more afraid of. What isn't good is that the shows are not done in 'real time'. So people think they can come in and see a design straightaway, and that the tattoo is only going to take fifteen minutes!

Total Tattoo: You mentioned about getting customers to trust you...

Marcin: Yes, that started to happen as soon as people saw more of our work.

Daniel: A lot of people didn't even know that we were Polish until they came in and started talking to us.

Marcin: I think some people thought that we wouldn't 'get' their idea, but then we'd make sure we'd chat with them.

marek



wojtek



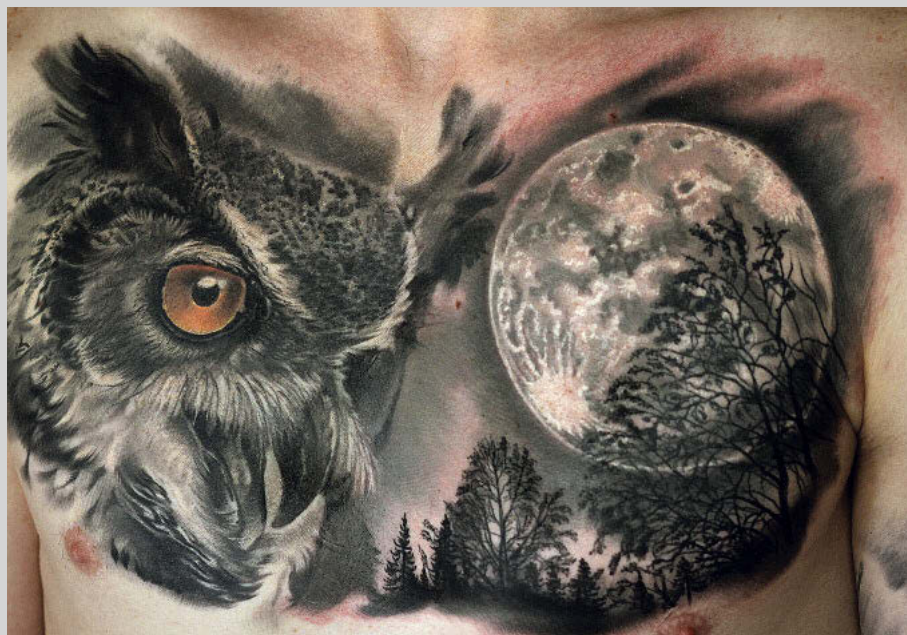
chris



marek



marcin



marek



Total Tattoo: As studio owners, do you find it hard to be businessmen and tattooists at the same time?

Marcin: A bit, but that's why we have Kamil!

Marek: We try to make everything as easy for everyone as possible, so we can all focus on our work.

Total Tattoo: I get the impression that you're more than colleagues, you're all friends too?

Wojtek: Definitely. And if we ever have any problems, it's easy to talk to one another.

Marcin: Everything's easier with friends!

Daniel: If one of us isn't happy about something, we can just say it how it is and that's fine. There's never any hard feelings.

Wojtek: I can't actually remember us ever having any problems!

Total Tattoo: As a studio, what are your strengths?

Marek: The good work that we do. I think it's the most important thing. When you do a good job, everybody knows that you're doing a good job.

Wojtek: I think we're all in a good place, in terms of our work. Everything is going smoothly. We know what our roles are, and Kamil is a good manager. He's really great with the customers.

Kamil: I always make sure I'm approachable with our customers, so they feel welcome. They're not just sitting and waiting for their appointment in silence. We want them to have a nice time, as well as getting good artwork!

Daniel: I think it's important that people who want to get a tattoo from us can sit and chat fully about what they want. We have a running joke that people come to make appointments, just so they can chat with Kamil!

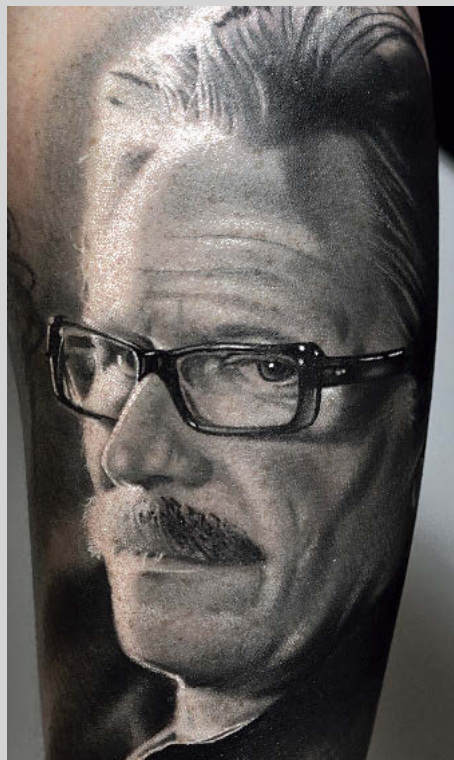
Wojtek: I think the atmosphere between all of us is a strong point of the studio. When people come here they feel that it's a welcoming, friendly studio.

Daniel: We don't see it as 'you come, get a tattoo, and then go.' Most of the people who get tattooed are taking days off work, so we want them to have a good experience.

chris



marcin



chris



Total Tattoo: It's very nerve-wracking, getting your first tattoo. A lot of people build it up, in their heads, but then nothing really changes afterwards...

Wojtek: I guess there are still a few people who are like that, who think the tattoo may change them as a person. But I think more people are into the tattoos themselves, rather than just 'being cool'. And most people know what they want now.

Total Tattoo: You're a very strong studio, so you must attract clients who are aware of your work. Almost like tattoo collectors?

Marek: Tattoo art collectors!

Marcin: We have clients who will get tattoos from more than one of us, which is great!

Kamil: Also people who will travel from other countries to get tattooed here.

Marcin: For a lot of people, it's easy to fly here. Sometimes it's easier to travel from the States than from Glasgow!

Daniel: Edinburgh is such a nice city as well, so a lot of people will combine sightseeing and getting a tattoo.

Kamil: We act as tourist guides on the side as well!

marek



marcin



chris



Total Tattoo: What made you come to Edinburgh in the first place?

Marcin: I saw an advert in a magazine for a tattooist. I sent in my portfolio and was invited over here. Me and Marek are from the same city in Poland and we knew each other before we worked together. So after I'd been in Scotland for a little while, Marek came over too.

Marek: I loved the weather!!

Marcin: I thought I might be here for a year, but I stayed on because of the city and its great atmosphere. Every day, when I walk to work, I'm still amazed by the views.

Total Tattoo: How did you establish yourselves here?

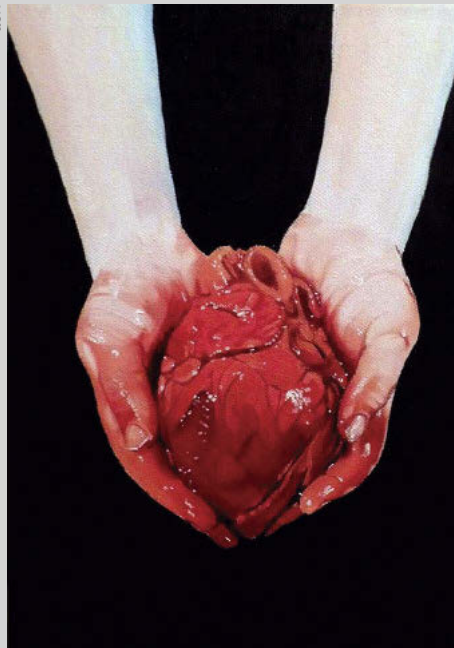
Marcin: Individually, we've pushed ourselves to do our best, which has ultimately paid off. Doing things like conventions as well. I was self-taught, and through drawing and focusing on my art I was able to learn more. I learned a lot from Marek, who was already tattooing. I started visiting conventions and watching people working, thinking about what they were doing and how the tattoos should look.

Marek: Social media has helped a lot, as well as getting our work published.

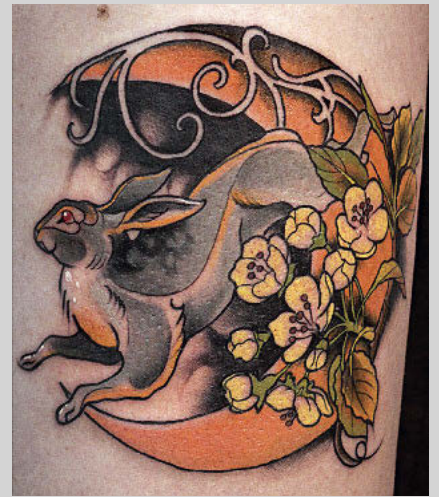
Daniel: For me, when I first started I was trying to do a lot of different styles, before focusing on one style. I was posting a lot on social media and I found that people were asking for one style only, which really changed things. Before that, I found it difficult to explain in consultations how client's tattoos would look, because they were looking at my portfolio and there was nothing specific to show examples of.

Wojtek: It was the same with me. When I started tattooing I did a few different styles, then I started to specialise. Even when I was a child, I really enjoyed doing dotwork and geometry, so I chose to focus on that. When I did, I found that people also wanted it.

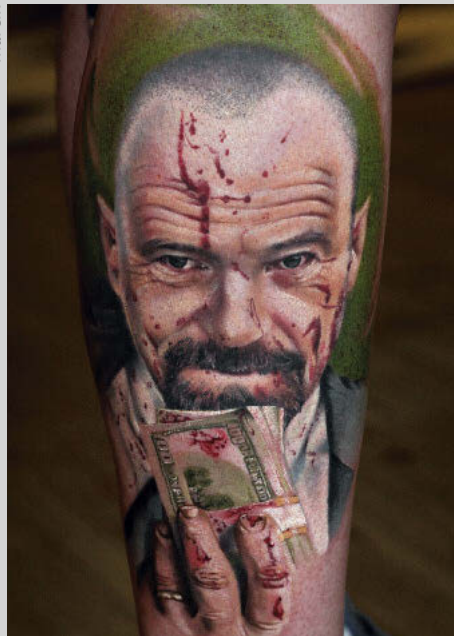
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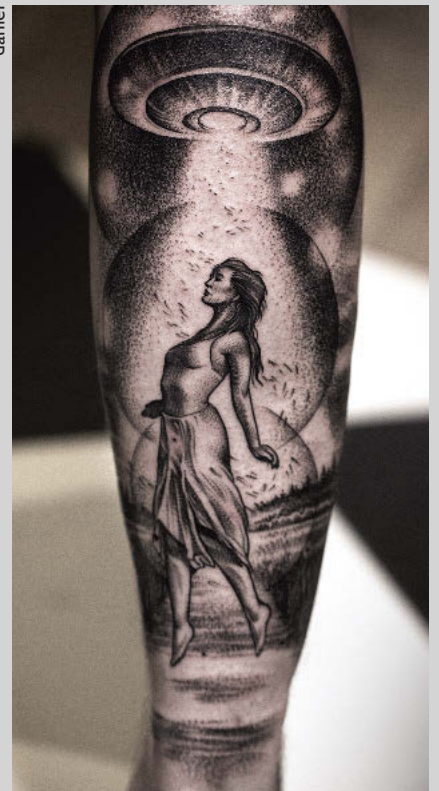
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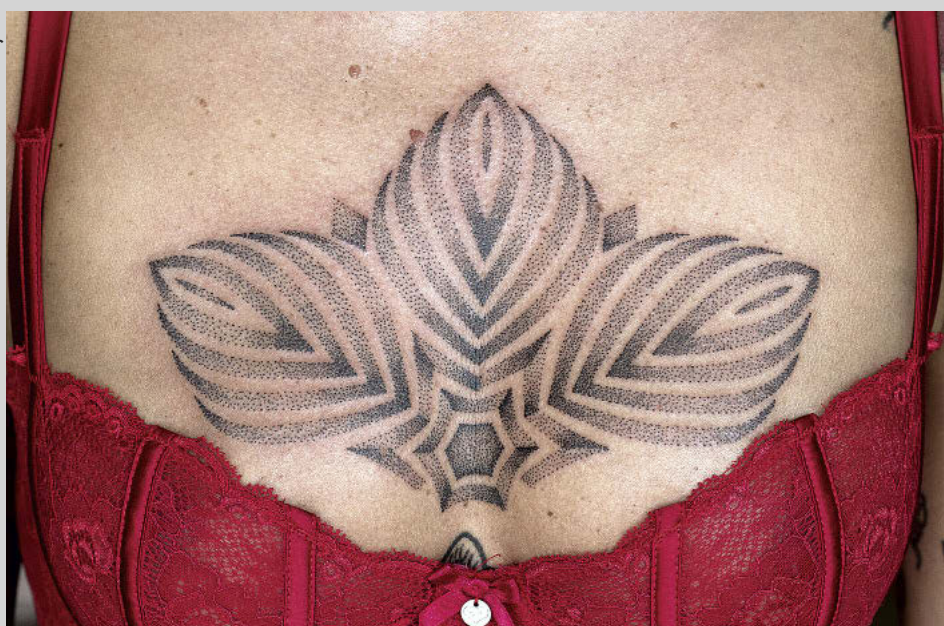
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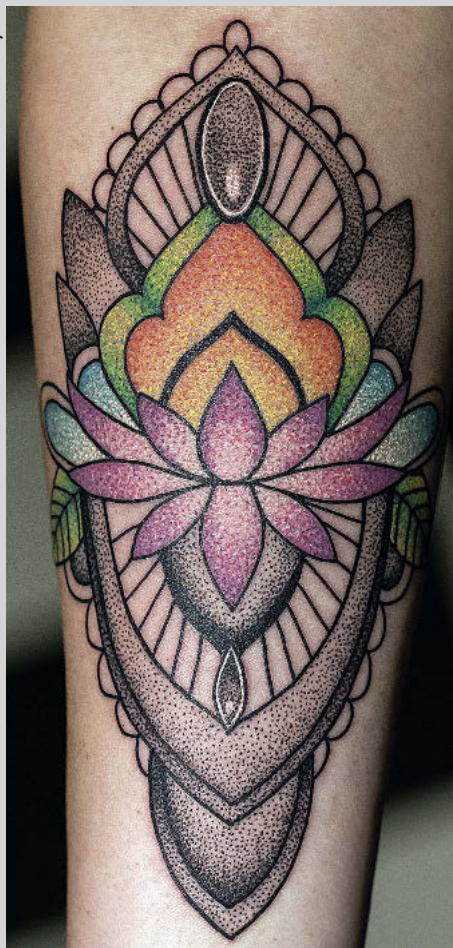


wojtek



ash





Total Tattoo: Is there a lot of competition within Edinburgh?

Wojtek: Not between artists.

Chris: Maybe there's more competition between street-shops, because of the walk-in trade. They tend to advertise a lot of special deals. Some clients are just after a small tattoo that they can get on the day, so that's often more tempting. But if someone knows what they want, and from who, then they're prepared to wait.

Total Tattoo: Do you work well together as a team?

Marek: Yes, we're like a collective. We are always about the tattoos we are making; what we can do better and stuff like that. We're always asking each other what we each think.

Marcin: It's easy to take criticism between friends. We know we can be honest with other.

Wojtek: It's good to have someone look over your shoulder, because they can see things you can't. It's how one improves.

Marcin: Even things like positioning, when we're putting the stencils on – we talk to each other about it.

Daniel: It's harder if you're doing it yourself, because you can't distance yourself from the design as you've worked on it for a long time. You can show it to the guys and they'll say 'Oh that's good', or 'No, go find a different job!'

Marcin: You can't act like you know everything, because obviously, nobody does!



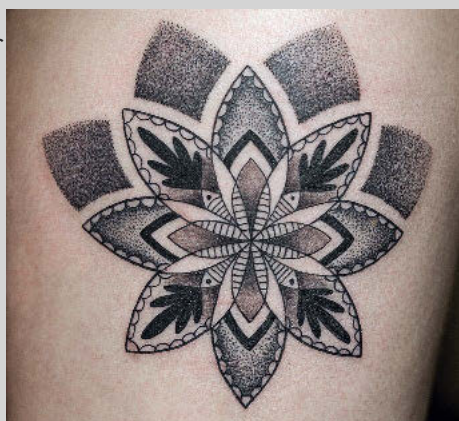
chris



wojtek



wojtek



marek



marek



wojtek



wojtek



Total Tattoo: And collectively, you move forward?

Chris: Exactly.

Marcin: We do the same with guest spots and conventions. Sometimes it's good to change the environment from one you're used to, to one that you don't know.

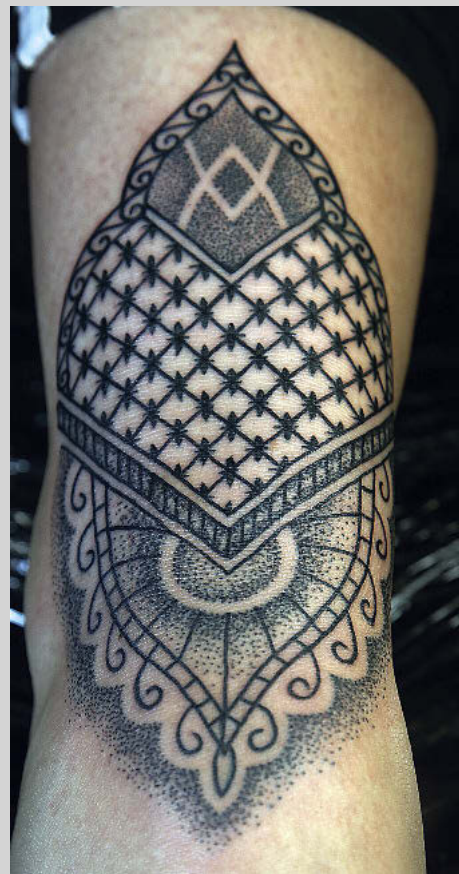
Wojtek: I find I always learn something new from watching other people in different places.

Marcin: It inspires you to try something new.

Total Tattoo: Are you inspired by each other's art?

Wojtek: Absolutely. I remember when Marcin started doing skin tone realism, he used a similar technique to how some people do dotwork. It's good to try and mix techniques.

Daniel: I remember when I first came to the studio and saw the work that Marek and Marcin were doing, I was blown away because I didn't realise that that level of art was possible.



Total Tattoo: What instigated the change and the broadening in styles?

Marcin: I think technology changed everything, to be honest. Now, there are a lot of great artists and I think it's the techniques and equipment which makes it easier. Artists can almost change their medium from pencil and painbrush to tattoo machine. You can literally pick up a machine and there's no tuning or problems with it. Chris still works with coils, because his work is very traditional, but most of us use rotaries.

Wojtek: I think rotaries changed everything. I suddenly realised that rotaries were similar in weight to pens. I wasn't trying to change my drawing style, but I was finding the best way to put ink into the skin.

Chris: I prefer coils because of the solid line. It's suited to my traditional work. I sometimes use rotaries, but that's mainly for adding colour. Obviously, there are rotaries which are suited to traditional line work as well, but I prefer coils for my work.

Total Tattoo: What does the studio mean to you?

Marcin: Be careful what you say, guys!!

Chris: I'm new to the studio, but it means a lot because I really want to push myself in tattooing and I think this is a great studio to help me do that.

Kamil: For me, it's like a second home.

Wojtek: Or even a first! It doesn't feel like work. When I come here in the morning, it doesn't feel like I'm going to work – rather just the place I want to be at.

Chris: Especially if you're doing a design that you really like. The moment you wake up, you feel excited about it.

Marek: Even if it's the evening before, when you're prepping the design, it's a great feeling.

Kamil: Unless the customer comes in and they're like 'I changed my mind...' That's not such a great feeling!

Marcin: When you go for a vacation, you go to relax. But when you come through these doors, it's a release, like 'Oh, I'm finally here!'

Daniel: Back to a safe zone!

chris



marek



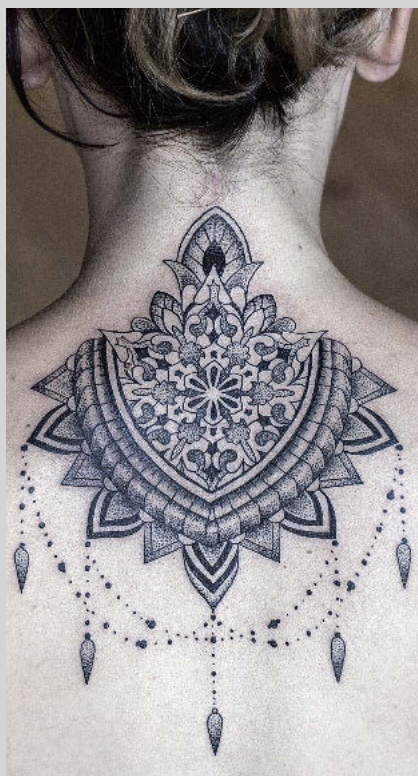
marek



chris



wojtek



marek



Total Tattoo: Do you find it hard to switch off from tattooing?

Marek: It's all about compromise, to be honest. We all have families, but there has to be a balance.

Daniel: We often work between eight and ten hours a day at the studio.

Marcin: I think about tattooing a lot, even if I'm not in the shop. If I'm seeing something nice around me, I'll start thinking about how it would look as a tattoo. And when you look at the work of other people on social media, it really is hard to switch off then!

Wojtek: We still try to have personal time after work. Myself, Marek and Marcin have kids, so we also need to find time for them. We all have two days off per week, but saying that, we often come in on our days off anyway!

Marcin: Sometimes we come in on our days off, just to say hi to each other.

Total Tattoo: What do you see as the future of the shop?

Marcin: We're going to take over the world! Seriously, we will see what the future will bring. You never know. But right now, things are going really well. We're happy.

Wojtek: We want to keep it as it is, with a great atmosphere and great artists.

Marek: If it stays the way it is, that's brilliant. If it gets even better, that's fantastic. Every year, it feels like the studio gets better and better.

Kamil: It's such a privilege to work with friends.

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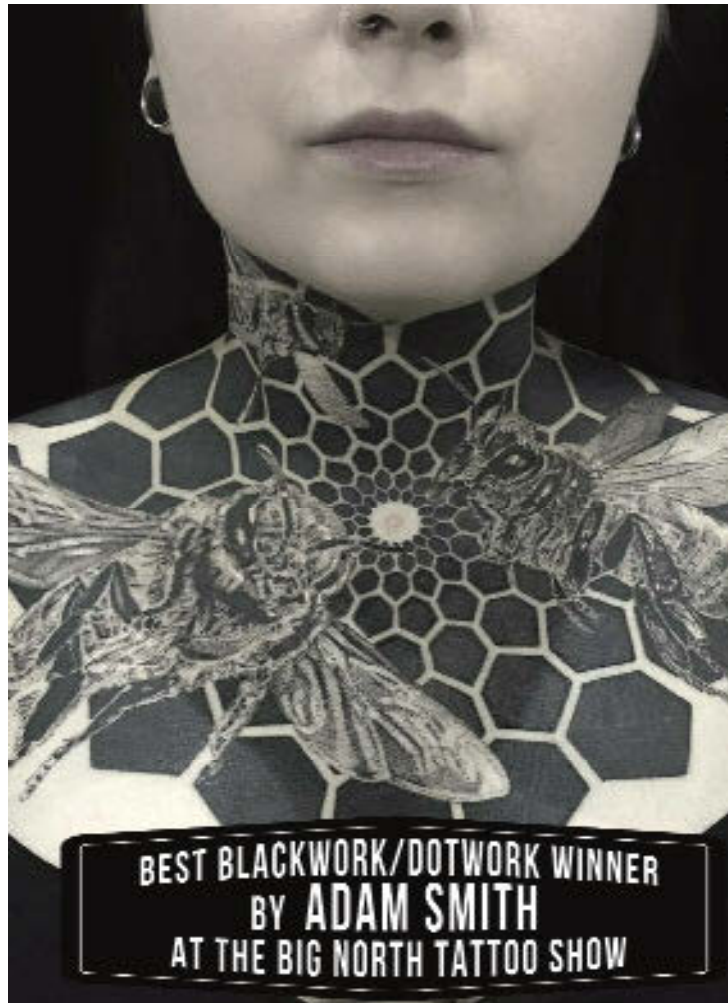


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TATTOO SHOW!
THANK YOU FOR INVITING OUR STUDIO
TO TAKE PART

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THEIR INCREDIBLY GENEROUS DONATION TO
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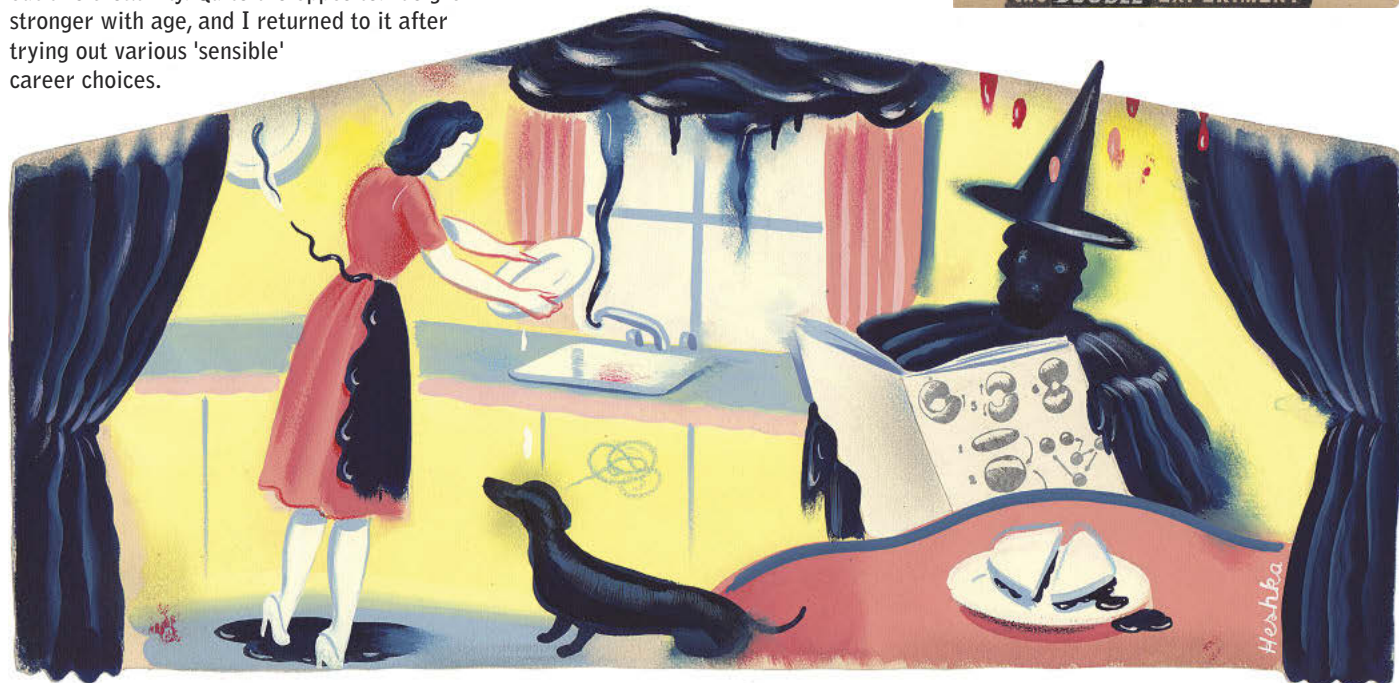
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RYAN HESHKA

Canadian painter and illustrator Ryan Heshka has exhibited in galleries across North America and Europe, and his work has appeared in many prestigious magazines including *Vanity Fair*, *Playboy*, *Esquire*, the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times*.

Have you been artistic all your life?

Yes, I've been drawing since I was four years old. There were several factors that fed my creativity. My parents always encouraged my artistic nature – possibly because it kept me out of their hair! – and I had many interests as a child: insects, pond life, space, comics, movies, animation, and so on. I enjoyed translating these interests on to paper, with pencils and felt markers. I guess it was my way of decoding the world, figuring it out. I used to make a lot of comics with my younger brother. We had an uncle who was actually quite close to us in age (he was only six years older than me) and the three of us used to make films, record 'radio' shows, draw, and just generally let our imaginations run wild. The big difference between myself and other children was that I never grew out this creativity. Quite the opposite. It's grown stronger with age, and I returned to it after trying out various 'sensible' career choices.





Did you have any formal artistic training?

My only formal artistic education was in Interior Design, which included a lot of drawing, art history, colour theory, and design basics – the crossover between art, architecture and design. So while I didn't get formal art and illustration training, my background is quite broad in terms of influences and this continues to be a real asset in terms of my visual voice. I ended up looking far beyond the work of other illustrators and artists, or the usual fine art influences, and studying people like Philippe Starck, Frank Lloyd Wright and Raymond Lowey.

How would you describe your style?

I generally think of my work as modern surrealism, although I am not really a surrealist in the true sense. Retro and neo-pulp are also terms that I use. But I never felt very comfortable categorising my work. That feels very limiting to me. Putting a label on it seems so definite, so final.





★ the Quiet Battle ★

To me, your work is very nostalgic and reminiscent of mid-century illustration and comics. Would you agree?

I agree wholeheartedly. As a young kid, I really fell under the spell of the '30s, '40s and '50s. Comics, magazines and films from that period were my primary interests, but I also loved industrial and graphic design. I have always found vintage comics to be a rich art form, and I love the junk along with the gems. In fact I tend to like the more 'out there' stuff, like the work of Fletcher Hanks, Basil Wolverton and early Marvel artists such as Bill Everett and Carl Burgos. The crude stuff, the work that looks like it was drawn in a fever dream. Even as a kid I was attracted to the underdogs and oddballs in comics. I appreciate technically brilliant work (like that of Will Eisner) but I gravitate towards the weird, the warped, the unique. The early days of comics delivered this in spades.

Tell us about the themes and imagery in your paintings.

There are many themes and subjects that appear repeatedly in my art, although I try hard not to regurgitate specific imagery or layouts. Lately I have been painting a lot of floating objects, in an attempt to capture the weightlessness of dreams. Pin-ups have been a staple in my work for over a decade, and they've evolved from something pretty classic into much edgier and weirder glamour girls in strange scenarios. Costumed twins holding up a



prehistoric-looking fish, for instance, or a 1940s-ish looking woman confronting a mass of floating flowers. I am always looking to move beyond the original material that inspired me and make my favourite genres my own. B-movie monsters, superheroes and my own brand of pulp fiction show up again and again, but they're filtered through my brain before paint hits the surface.

Do you think that art has to have a narrative, or meaning?

If there is a narrative, it should flow naturally. But I enjoy feedback from people who describe the *feeling* they get from looking at my art. The feeling, for me, is the primary function. Sometimes I will arrive at a meaning after a painting is completed... It's definitely not something I'm conscious of during the preliminary work. Personally, I enjoy art that doesn't say everything at the surface level. Art that leaves things open to interpretation.

How hard is it to be recognised as an established artist? And was there a point where you thought "I'm officially established now"?

The terms 'recognised' and 'established' are open to interpretation! But I do feel that after seventeen years, I'm established in my career and reputation. That's not to say that I feel comfortable in my art, though. I'm constantly pushing myself to take new approaches to my work, and very often I feel like I don't know what the hell I'm doing. But I push through. I learn. So I never feel like I can make the statement "I've arrived!"



Artists are often stereotyped as financially struggling. Is art a viable and sustainable source of income in the 21st century?

The digital era has opened new avenues of commerce and promotion. Social media has been an incredible development for artists wanting to get their brand out there. If you are driven, and motivated to create when you wake up in the morning, then you can make a living making art.

What do you feel about the relationship between artists and galleries?

Although the internet has opened up so many opportunities for self-promotion, I still find that getting your work into a gallery is vital. People need to see something 'in the flesh' to appreciate it. A jpeg is no comparison to the real thing. Art is an experience, and bricks-and-mortar galleries and museums provide that experience. A good gallery can get your work into the hands of collectors to whom you might not otherwise have access.

As well as painting your own concepts, you're a very in-demand illustrator. Do you find it easier, or more difficult, to work to a client's brief?

Working with a brief is just part of the illustration process, and I'm used to it. In fact, because I'm so used to being an illustrator, I find it difficult not to treat my own paintings as illustrations! I am trying to remove myself from the illustration process (idea to rough sketches to line art to execution) and think more freely. That is now my biggest hurdle.

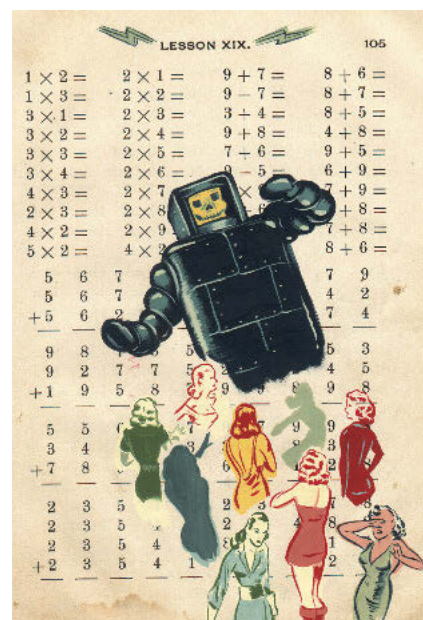


How much freedom are you given with illustration briefs?

That totally depends on the art director and sometimes the editor. I've experienced everything from total freedom to having to work from an art director's finished layout idea. The latter presents the biggest obstacle to creating good work, as my vision usually doesn't overlap with other people's specific solutions. But that's part of commercial work: putting ego aside.

I love the cute-yet-creepy characters used in your children's book illustrations...

The children's books were amazingly free of guidance and direction (aside from making the book child-appropriate of course). My editor, Christy Ottaviano, gave me so much freedom and really trusted me to do my best work. That's the sign of a great editor or client: they know you are capable, and stay out of the way. They let you do what you do.



DRUGS

MYSTERIOUS



HESHKA

50



What would you say has been the highlight of your career so far?

My first solo show in Italy at the Antonio Colombo Arte Contemporanea (Milan, 2012) really stands out. It was a show of only twenty five small pieces (and I mean really small), but breaking into the international market and showing in Europe was huge for me. Not long after that, I mailed a letter of appreciation and a catalogue from that show to David Lynch and received an email response from the man himself. It was a brief moment of connection with one of my art heroes.

You're currently in the process of compiling a monograph of your work. Can you tell us about that?

Yes, we are just wrapping up the design portion. I feel extremely fortunate to be working with an editor like Rodolphe Lachat, who publishes artists such as Marion Peck, Mark Ryden and Joe Coleman. He's been open to pretty much all of my suggestions regarding content, and we are using one of his designers who has done a fine job keeping the art at the forefront. The book is due for release this Autumn.

How did you feel looking back at your earlier work?

Looking back at earlier work can be rather painful, but I try to see those older pieces as part of the learning process. They all have some value in the big picture and have served some purpose – even the flops. Surprisingly, many of the pieces have held up over time and are included in the book. But many, many paintings did not make the cut. There could be another whole book of just the rejects.



Do you think it's important for artists to leave a legacy?

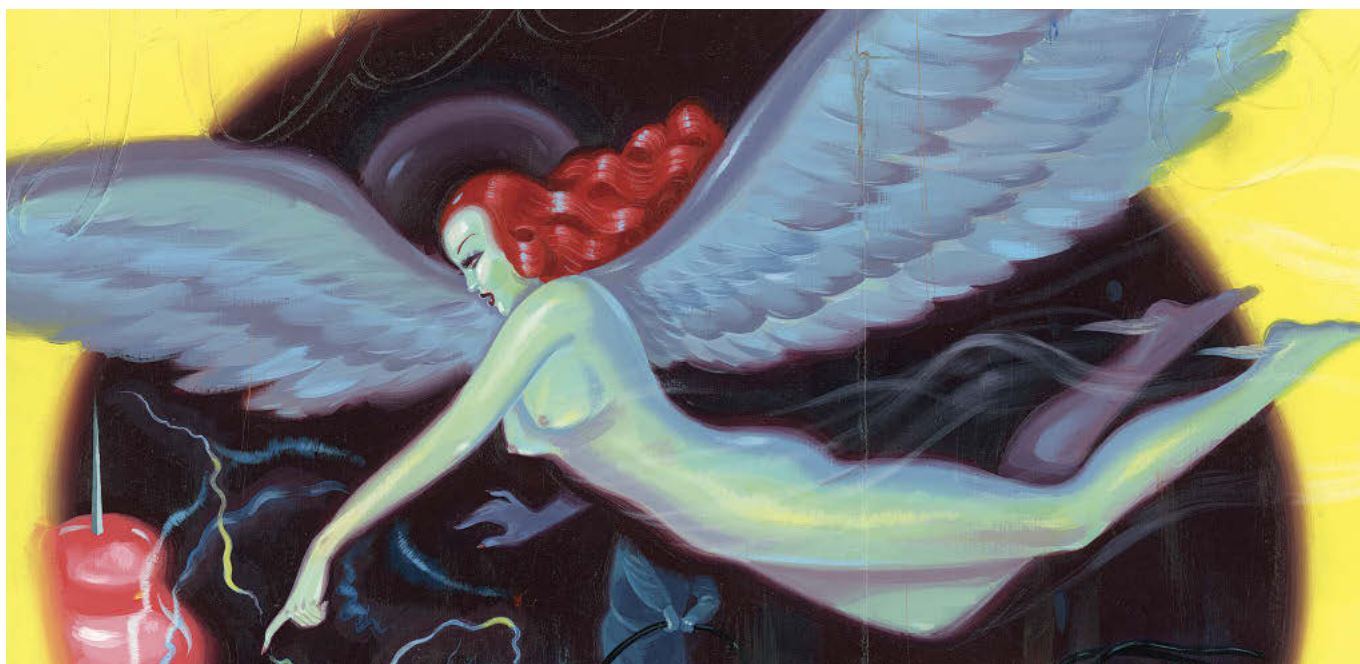
I do. I never set out to create a legacy in the beginning, but being aware of it now really causes me to think what direction I want my work to take, and what I want the next stage to look like.



What does art mean to you?

Art – the making of art – is all about recapturing that feeling of abandon and freedom that I had during my childhood. Creating for the sheer love of it. Ideally, most days, art comes from that place.

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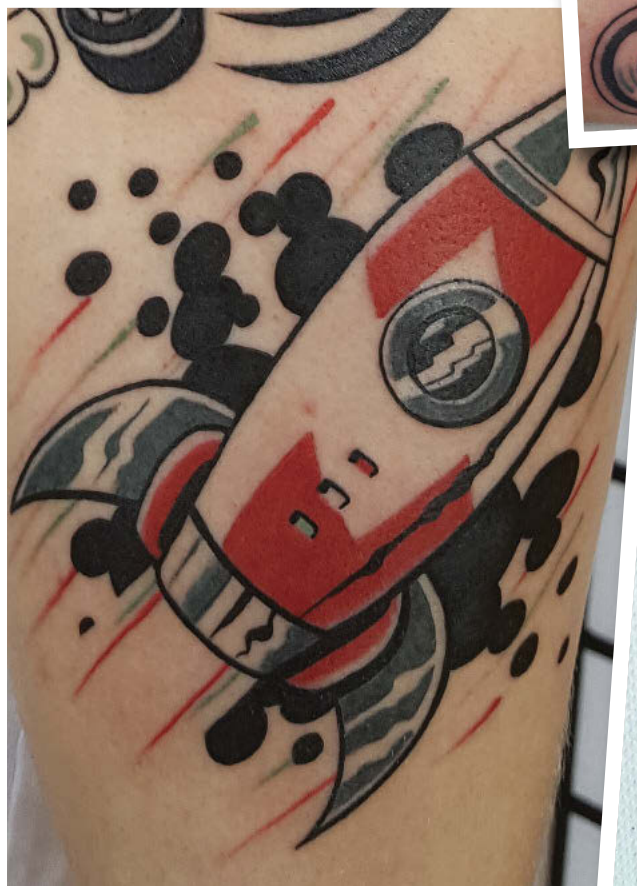
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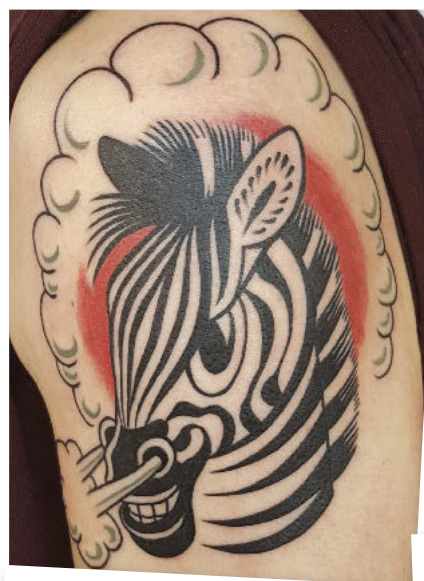
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PORTFOLIO

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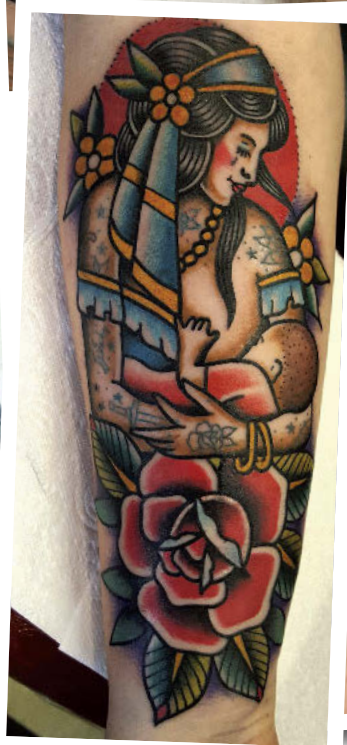
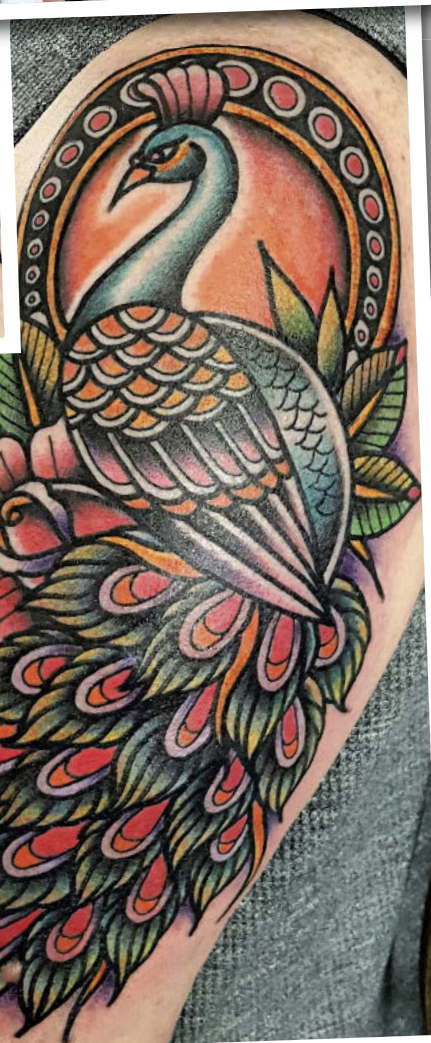
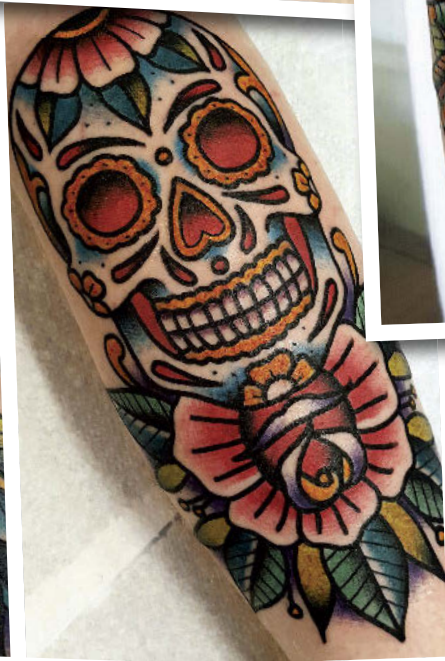
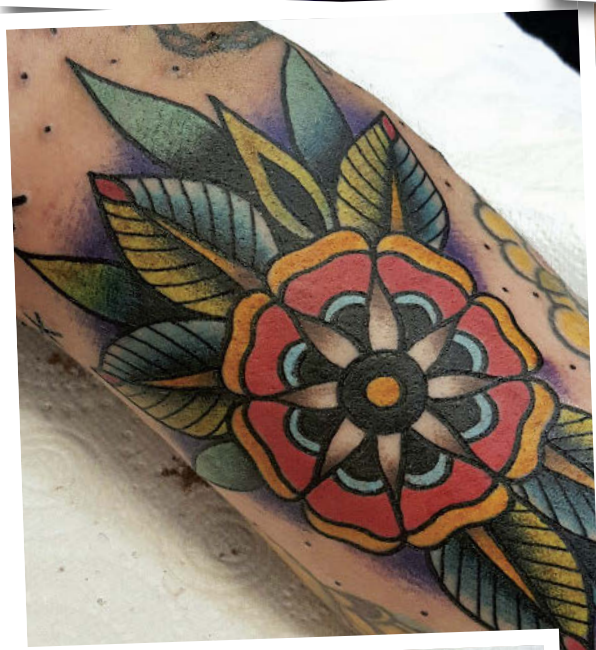
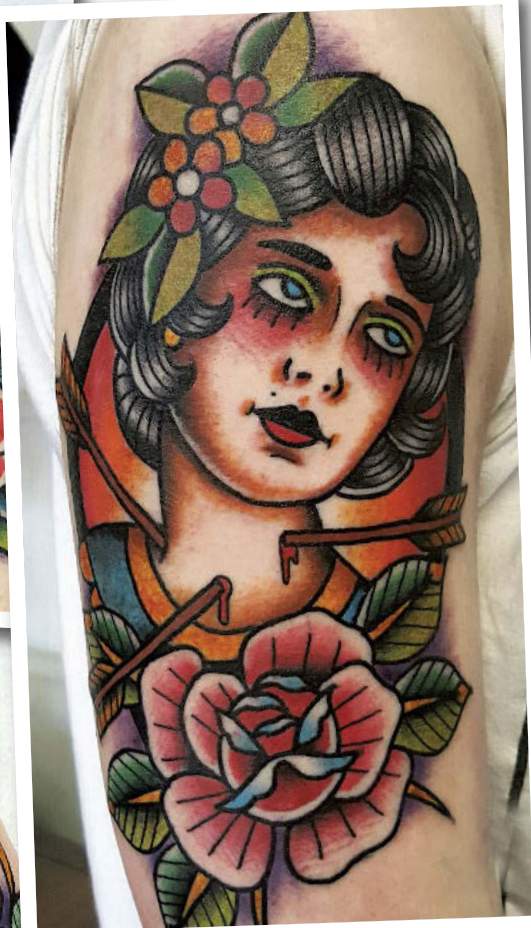
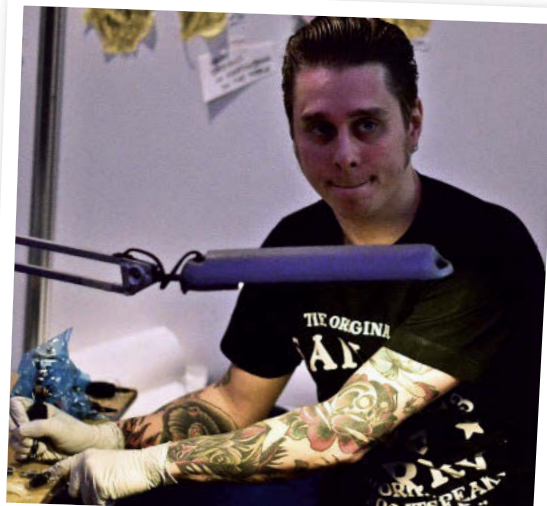
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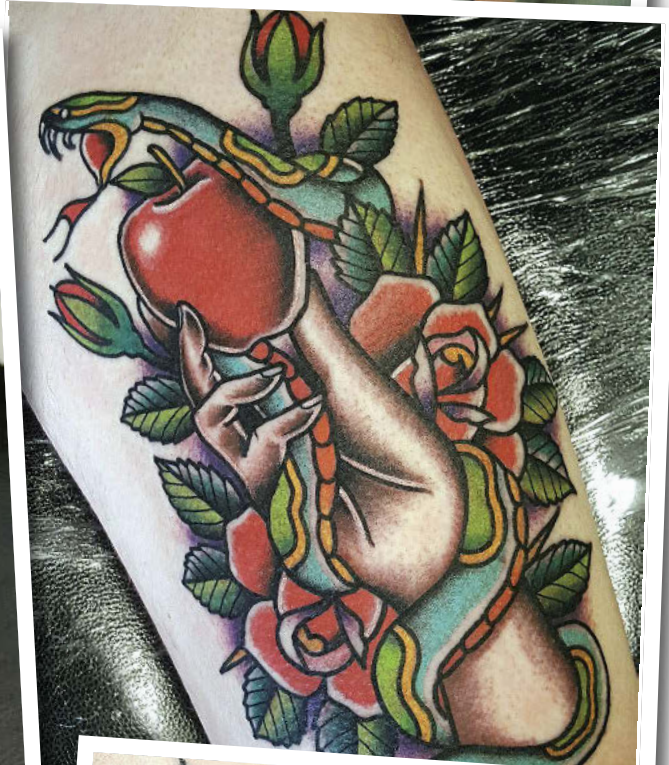
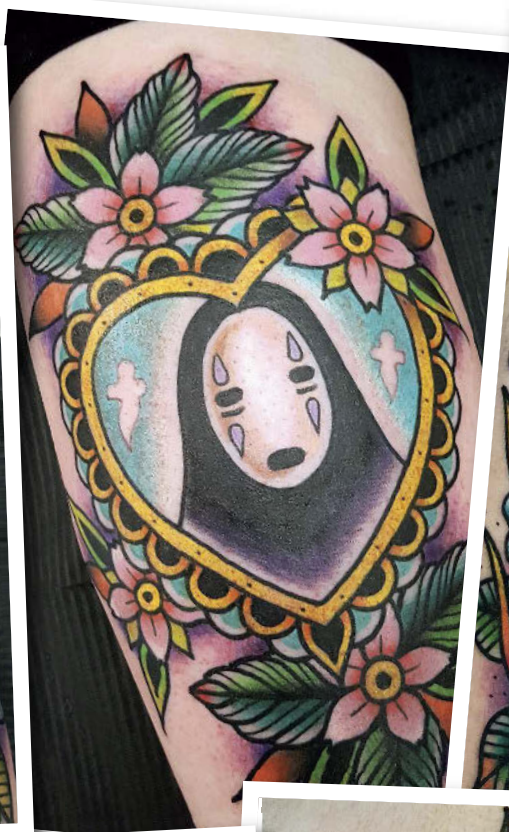




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TALES FROM THE NAUGHTY STEP

From his hospital bed, through a haze of medication, Paul Talbot sends you this impassioned plea, which should be read whilst listening to Baz Luhrmann's "Everybody's Free (To Wear Sunscreen)"

Ladies and gentlemen of the class of 2017, buy health insurance.
If I could offer you only one tip for the future, health insurance would be it.
The long-term benefits of health insurance have been proven by doctors,
Whereas the rest of my advice has no basis more reliable
Than my own meandering experience...

I will dispense this advice now.

Enjoy the power and beauty of your tattoos, oh, never mind
You will never understand the power
And the beauty of your tattoos until they've faded.
But trust me, in twenty years
You will look back at photos of your work
And recall in a way you can't grasp now
How much possibility lay before you
And how fabulous it really looked
Your lines are not as wonky as you imagine...

Don't worry about the future or worry that worrying
Is as effective as trying to do dotwork with a knife and fork on a
rollercoaster.
The real troubles in your life are apt to be things
That never crossed your worried mind
The kind that blindsides you at 9am on some idle Saturday.

Do one thing every day that scares you, blend colours
Don't be mean about other peoples' tattoos
Don't put up with people who are mean about yours, stipple

Don't waste your time on jealousy
Sometimes you win an award, sometimes you don't
The race is long and in the end, it's only with yourself
Remember nice comments you receive on instagram, forget the trolls

If you succeed in doing this, tell me how.
Keep your old convention passes, throw away your old bank statements, use
really big bags

Be kind to knees, you'll miss them when they're gone
Maybe you'll be famous, maybe you won't
Maybe you'll get sponsorships, maybe you won't
Maybe you'll never work a convention, maybe you'll dance the 'Macarena' at
your lifetime achievement award.
Whatever you do, don't congratulate yourself too much
Or berate yourself either
Your choices are half chance, so are everybody else's.

Enjoy your body, decorate it every way you can
Don't be afraid of it or what other people think of it
It's the greatest instrument you'll ever own, bloodline
Even if you have nowhere to do it but on a pound of flesh.

Get to know your booth buddy, you never know when they'll be gone for
good
Be nice to other tattooists, they are your best link to your past
And the people most likely to stick with you in the future
Understand that friends come and go
But a precious few, you should hold on to.

Work hard to bridge the gaps in geography and lifestyle
For the older you get, the more you need the people
You knew when you were young.
Live in Birmingham once, but leave before it makes you hard
Live in Catshill once, but leave before it makes you soft
Travel, accept certain inalienable truths:
Tattoo prices will rise, artists will philander, you too will get old
And when you do, you'll fantasise that when you were young
Tattoo prices were reasonable, artists were noble
And the new school respected the old school
Respect the old school.

Don't expect anyone else to support you
Maybe you have a studio, maybe you'll rent a chair
But you'll never know when either one will end.
Don't mess too much with your teeth or by the time you're forty
They will look like the window of a jewellery shop
Be careful whose advice you take, but be patient with those who supply it
Advice is a form of nostalgia, dispensing it is a way of
Dusting off old flash sheets, wiping away the nicotine stains,
Blasting over the ugly parts and recycling it for more than it's worth

But trust me on the health insurance.

Until next time - Paul
talesfromthenaughtystep@gmail.com

CONVENTION CALENDAR

UK CONVENTIONS

4-6 August

Dublin International Tattoo Convention

Dublin Convention Centre
Spencer Dock
N Wall Quay, Dublin 1
www.dublintoattooconvention.com/

16-17 August

Galway Tattoo Show

Radisson Hotel, Galway, Ireland
www.galwaytattooshow.ie

18-20 August

Blackpool Tatcon

Norbreck Castle Hotel
Queen's Promenade
Blackpool, Lancashire FY2 9AA
www.tatconblackpool.co.uk

18-20 August

Norwich Body Arts Festival

Open
Bank Plain, Norwich
www.norwichbodyartfestival.co.uk

26-27 August

Cornwall Tattoo Convention

Falmouth University
Penryn Campus, Treliever Road,
Penryn TR10 9FE,
www.cornwalltattooconvention.co.uk

1-3 September

Maiden City Ink

Everglades Hotel, Prehen Road,
Derry/Londonderry
www.maidencityink.com

2-3 September

Kustom Kulture Blast off

Lincolnshire Showground
Grange-de-Lings (A15) Gate 1
Lincoln LN2 2NA
www.kustomkultureblastoff.com

22-24 September

The International London Tattoo Convention

Tobacco Dock
50 Porters Walk
London E1W 2SF
www.thelondontattooconvention.com/

23 - 24 September

Buckley Ink Tattoo Convention

The Tivoli
Brunswick Rd,
Buckley CH7 2EF,
United Kingdom
www.facebook.com/Buckley-Ink-1036339253091640/

29-1 October

Midlands Tattoo Industry Show

Athena Leicester
Athena, Queen Street
LE1 1QD Leicester
www.facebook.com/Midlands-Tattoo-industry-Show

14th- 15th October

Halloween Tattoo Bash

Wolverhampton Racecourse
Gorsebrook Rd
Wolverhampton WV6 0PE
United Kingdom
www.halloweentattooobash.co.uk/

21 - 22 October

Wild Atlantic Tattoo Show

West Cork Hotel
Ilenn Street, Skibbereen
Co. Cork
Ireland
www.facebook.com/wildatlantictattooshow

21-22 October

Epidermis Tattoo Convention

Westpoint Exeter
Clyst St Mary
Exeter EX5 1DJ
United Kingdom
www.epidermisconvention.com

27 - 29 October

Jurassic Coast

Premier Inn Hotel Bournemouth Central
Westover Rd, Bournemouth,
Dorset BH1 2BZ,
United Kingdom
facebook.com/jurassiccoasttattooconvention

10-12 November

East Coast Tattoo Expo

Highfield Holiday Park,
London Road,
Clacton-On-Sea,
Essex, CO16 9QY
www.eastcoastexpo.co.uk/

18-19 November

Wrexham Tattoo Show

William Aston Hall
Glyndwr University
Mold Rd, Wrexham LL11 2AF,
United Kingdom
www.wrexhamtattooshow.com/

OVERSEAS

4-6 August

Berlin Tattoo Convention

Arena Berlin, 12435 Treptow
www.tattoo-convention.de

25-27 August

Stockholm Ink Bash

Münchenbryggeriet Event & Konferens
Torkel Knutssongatan 2
118 25 Stockholm
Sweden
www.stockholminkbash.com/

1st-3rd September

Shanghai Tattoo Extreme Expo

Shanghai International Fashion Center
2866 Yangshupu Rd
Yangpu, Shanghai
www.tattooeextremeexpo.com/

15-17 September

Kaiserstadt Tattoo Expo

Tivoli Eissporthalle
Hubert-Wienen-Straße 8,
52070 Aachen,
Germany
www.kaiserstadt-tattoo-expo-aachen.com

15-17 September

Montreux Tattoo Convention

Montreux Music & Convention Centre
Av. Claude-Nobs 5
1820 Montreux
Switzerland
montreuxtattooconvention.ch/

29-1 October

Barcelona Tattoo Expo

Fira Barcelona Montjuïc
Avinguda Reina Maria Cristina, 1
08004 Barcelona
Spain
www.barcelonatattooexpo.com

1-2 October

International Builders and Tattoo Industry Expo

The BOX
Mekongweg 5,
1043 AE Amsterdam,
Netherlands
www.facebook.com/BUILDERSTATTOOindustryExpo/

6-8 October

Monster Ink Tattoo Fest

Evenementenhal Venray
De Voorde 30
5807 EZ Venray
Netherlands
www.monsterinktattoofest.com

20-22 October 2017

Evian Tattoo Show

Palais des Congrès d'Évian-les-Bains
Place Peintre Charles Cottet
74500 Évian-Les-Bains
France
www.evian.tattoo/

27-29 October

Rites Of Passage

Royal Hall of Industries
1 Driver Ave,
Moore Park NSW 2021,
Australia
www.thetattoofestival.com

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